

Pilates Conditioning

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Joseph H. Pilates believed that physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness. His interpretation of physical fitness as “the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with a sound mind fully capable of performing varied tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure” is now a widely popular philosophy that has largely changed our approach to conditioning. Dancers and various other athletes are drawn to the regimen of specific sequencing that incorporates six essential elements that serve to not only condition their body with incredible results, but discipline their mind for improved neuromuscular command. The focus on stretching, strengthening, and balancing the body has proven the Pilates Method is not only an invaluable fitness endeavor, but an important aspect of professional sports conditioning and physical rehabilitation.

It is essential to schedule a private session with a certified reputable professional that will properly introduce the Pilates Method to your body. Compensated movement, irregular breathing patterns, and poor posture are just a sample of the areas your instructor will correct for you to achieve maximum benefit. Once you understand the basic concepts, more affordable group classes are available so that you may continue a regimen of two to three times a week.

The three main categories of exercises are the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Lines. All new students, regardless of prior fitness ability, begin with the basic line and systematically build upon this foundation. This ensures a safe and effective transformation of your body. It is important to remember that patience is key! Strengthening intrinsic muscles of the body (including deep core muscles) and adapting to new and healthy habits of posture takes time and effort to be lasting and effective. Pilates allows you to not only reap the benefits of exercise, but enjoy the process of transformation!

Here’s how to get the most out of your Pilates experience.

If taking a group mat class for the first time:

- ✓ Arrive on time for class. If you are new to the facility, arrive a few minutes early to complete the medical waiver and to pay for class.
- ✓ Tell the instructor you are new to the class.
- ✓ Inform the instructor if you have any injuries or restrictions.
- ✓ Wear comfortable clothing and no shoes.
- ✓ Be sure to drink plenty of water after class.
- ✓ Expect the instructor to verbally cue you rather than demonstrate exercises.
- ✓ Expect feedback and corrections on your exercise form. This is what you’re paying for!

SIX BASIC PILATES PRINCIPLES

- ❖ *Centering: The main focus of Pilates. The center is the “powerhouse” of the body.*
- ❖ *Concentration: Exercises are executed with focus to center the mind with the body in action.*
- ❖ *Control: Work form the center to control movement. Habits must not take over.*
- ❖ *Precision: Each exercise has a precise goal to reach the full benefit of every exercise.*
- ❖ *Breath: All exercises are done with the rhythm of the breath with the an emphasis on exhalation.*
- ❖ *Flow: There is a minimum of movement for a maximum flow.*



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Many Pilates studios offer group equipment classes that use the Reformer, Cadillac, Tower, and Wunda Chair as an affordable alternative to one-on-one instruction. You should use caution when enrolling in these classes and only do so after at least three private sessions. It is essential to be familiar with the apparatus before exercising in one of these group sessions.

Questions to ask when choosing a Pilates instructor:

- 1. Where were you certified? You want to select an instructor that has been through a rigorous training process that required at least 600 hours of apprentice work.*
- 2. Why did you choose that certification program? If you are not familiar with the many certifications available today, just having someone explain why they chose the program can alert you to the type of instructor they are. DO NOT select an individual that based their decision on how easy or fast the program was to complete.*
- 3. How long have you been teaching Pilates? It is best to choose an instructor that has been teaching for at least two years.*
- 4. What is your background? Instructors that have experience and education in physical therapy, dance and other fields related to kinesiology, tend to be acutely aware of alignment and are able to explain the changes in execution that need to be made.*

If taking a Pilates group equipment class for the first time:

- ✓ Arrive on time for class. If you are new to the facility, arrive a few minutes early to complete the medical waiver and to pay for class.
- ✓ Tell the instructor you are new to the class.
- ✓ Be familiar with the specific equipment you will be using. Arrive a few minutes early to class if this is a new studio.
- ✓ Inform the instructor if you have any injuries or restrictions.
- ✓ Wear comfortable clothing and no shoes. Socks are recommended for equipment work.
- ✓ Expect the instructor to verbally cue you rather than demonstrate exercises.
- ✓ Expect the instructor to manually cue or spot you to assist you in your execution of exercises.



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An introduction to Pilates mat:

The Hundred (Basic):

1. Lie on your back and pull your knees into your chest. Inhale deeply and sink your chest and abdomen into the mat beneath you.
2. Reach your arms long at your side, reaching for the wall in front of you as you bring your chin up to your chest and focus on your belly.
3. Stretch your legs up to the ceiling and squeeze your buttocks and inner thighs as you lower your legs to an angle.
4. Pump your arms up and down from the shoulder while constantly pulling your navel to spine.
5. Deeply inhale for five counts and exhale for five counts. Repeat for one hundred counts.

The Roll Up (Basic):

1. Lie flat on your back with your arms extended overhead and pull your navel to spine. Squeeze your buttocks and upper inner thighs together and flex your feet.
2. Reach your arms up to the ceiling and pull your head through your arms (as though your framing your face with your straight arms). Continue to pull your navel to spine as you roll up and forward staying round. Do not flatten your back as you reach for your toes.
3. Initiating from your belly, pull your navel into the lower back as you pinch the bottom and roll down one vertebrae at a time. The arms stay shoulder height as you roll back and then reach up for the ceiling and finally back over your head.
4. Inhale to come up, exhale to reach for your toes. Inhale to roll back, exhale from the waistline to the mat.

Single Leg Circles (Basic):

1. Lie flat on your back with the arms extended down by your sides, navel to spine, with one leg straight up to the ceiling.
2. The leg then makes a small circle crossing over the body first (counterclockwise). Keep both hips and shoulders anchored to the mat at all times.
3. After five circles in one direction, reverse and then bend the leg in and stretch it long.
4. Repeat on the other leg.
5. Breathe naturally.

Rolling Like A Ball (Basic):

1. Sitting up, bring your bottom down to your heels bending your knees and grabbing your ankles.
2. The head is rested on the chest in between the knees. Feet are slightly off the mat and slightly pointed.
3. Use your navel to initiate the rolling back and rolling forward staying in a ball position.
4. Keep your heels glued to your body the entire time with your shoulders depressed and chest relaxed.
5. Inhale as you go back and exhale as you go forward.

Single Leg Stretch (Basic):

1. Lie flat on your back with the right leg bent into the chest. Put your right hand on your ankle and your left hand on your knee. (This will keep your leg in proper alignment with your hip).
2. Lift you chin up to your chest, focusing on your belly. Extend you left leg out at an angle reaching as far to the floor as you can while still maintaining navel to spine.
3. Inhale as you pull the right knee to your right shoulder twice and exhale as you switch and pull your left knee in to your left shoulder. (Hand placement on left leg should be left hand on ankle and rights hand on knee).
4. Repeat five to ten times and pull both knees to chest.



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Double Leg Stretch (Basic):

1. Lie flat on your back with both knees bent to chest, grabbing your ankles with both hands.
2. The chin is lifted to chest and remains there as you inhale and reach the arms and legs long and strong in opposite directions and hold the position.
3. The arms scoop around to the sides and back down to grab your ankles hugging them into the chest as you exhale. Remember to keep the navel to spine and lift your legs up at the angle as high as need be to protect the back.
4. Repeat five to ten times and pull both knees to chest.

Single Straight Leg Stretch (Intermediate):

1. Lie flat on your back, navel to spine and chin to chest.
2. Stretch your right leg straight up in air as you grab your right ankle with both hands. The opposite leg is stretched out at an angle, hovering slightly above the mat.
3. Keeping the elbows out, pull the right leg toward with a pulse then switch the legs keeping them straight the entire time. Inhale one leg and exhale the other.
4. Repeat five to ten times.

Double Straight Leg Stretch (Intermediate):

1. Put your hands behind your head, lift your chin to your chest, and bring your legs together at a ninety-degree angle in slight first position (Pilates stance).
2. Squeezing your bottom and inner thighs, lower both legs to the floor as much as possible while still maintaining a flat back and inhale.
3. Drawing your navel deeper to the spine, exhale as you bring the legs back up to the start position.
4. Repeat five to ten times and pull; both knees to your chest.

Criss Cross (Intermediate):

1. Lie flat on your back with both hands behind your head, drawing your chin up to your chest.
2. Put your left elbow to your right knee as you extend the left leg out at an angle just above the floor. Look behind you as you pull your right elbow to the back wall.
3. Switch and pull your right elbow to your left knee as the right leg extends out.
4. Inhale one set and exhale one set. Repeat for five to ten sets.

Spine Stretch Forward (Basic):

1. Sit up with your legs extended straight in front shoulder width apart with flexed feet. Extend both arms out in front of your shoulders.
2. Starting from the top of your head and drawing the navel to spine, roll down and forward one vertebrae at a time as your arms continue to reach forward. Exhale as you roll into a "C", never flattening the lower back to the floor.
3. Squeeze your buttocks as you inhale and roll up, stacking one vertebra at a time and initiating from the navel.
4. Repeat 5 times.

***** Remember that Basic does not mean easy but rather the first exercises introduced that are essential for the process of transformation.**

For additional information: www.pilates-studio.com www.pilatesmethodallisnce.com

