

**“Physical Fitness can neither
be achieved by wishful thinking
nor outright purchase.”**



Pilates Fundamentals

By:

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What is Pilates?

Stretching and strengthening exercises developed by Joseph Pilates over 100 years ago to create a healthy mind, a healthy body and a healthy life.

Our bodies are the only tool we need to achieve fitness.

Why was Pilates Created?

Pilates developed his fitness system in Germany in the early 1900s to strengthen his frail body plagued by asthma and rickets. As an orderly during WWI, he developed spring-based exercises for non-ambulatory patients, which evolved into the machine for which he is known—the Reformer. The matwork is just as effective as the reformer.

His original system was done with a mat and was called "The Art of Contrology."

How can Pilates Help You?

Pilates will help to change the way you relate to your own body and the way you move in the world. With regular practice of the Pilates Principles, you will feel stronger, longer, younger, and more flexible.

Lengthen as you Strengthen.

Understanding the Principles

Steady Breath: Throughout your practice, focus on inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. The rhythm of your breath will determine the intensity of your workout. Use the breath to relax the mind to allow the muscles to perform their task without tensing up.

*Basic Principles:
Steady breath, mental focus, muscle control, powerhouse awareness, grace, precision, imagination, and integration.*

Mental Focus: Stay focused on how you are using your breath and your muscles to achieve the goal of each exercise.

Muscle Control: Engage the muscles required to perform the exercise and relax everything else, including your jaw, neck and facial muscles. If you don't need to use it, turn it off.

Powerhouse: Your powerhouse is located between the bottom of your skull to the bottom of your buttocks.

Engage your abdominal muscles by pulling your navel towards your spine and engage your pelvic floor muscles to assist you, especially during exhalations.

Pull Up and In.

Posture and Poise: Visualize effortless & grace during your practice, and as you carry yourself throughout the day. Lengthen from your powerhouse to your extremities, using gravity and grace to stack your bones in anatomical alignment...ears over shoulders over hips over knees over ankles. Keep your body in neutral while standing, sitting, and moving.

Precision: Make sure you are moving at a pace that allows you to perform each exercise correctly in order to avoid injury and increase efficiency.

Imagination: Visualize how your body is taking you through the motions.

Intuition: Listen to your body and know when to ease off or gradually increase the intensity. Never allow the exercises to be painful. If it is, modify it or skip it altogether.

Integration: Rather than focusing on one body part at a time, treat your body as a whole during each exercise, and throughout your lifetime.

How Do I Find My Center and Move From My Center?

Engage Padha, Mula, Udiyana, Jaladhara Bandhas/Locks (yoga fundamentals)

Padha: Stand with your feet hip-width apart, distributing your weight evenly amongst the 4 corners of each foot, and evenly between both feet, engaging your upper thigh muscles to assist in keeping you centered and balanced.

Mula: Activate and pull up on your pelvic floor muscles to assist in stabilizing your Powerhouse.

Udiyana: While breathing easily, engage your abdominal/core muscles by pulling your navel towards your spine, as if you needed to squeeze into a small window. On the mat, keep your lumbar (lower) spine gently pressed into the mat as you perform each exercise. Tuck your tail-bone slightly while keeping your sacrum touching the mat.

Jaladhara: Lift your sternum keeping a very slight tuck in your chin. Allow your shoulder blades to slide down your back ribs as you lift up from the crown of your head towards the sky. By keeping your head and chin centered on top of your shoulders, you avoid being in Fight-Or-Flight/Sympathetic Mode. On the mat, lift your head and re-place it with your cervical vertebrae gently pressing into the mat. Use a small towel or pillow if your cervical curve is keeping your chin higher than your forehead.

Anchor or Stabilize the part of your body Not in Motion as You Engage the Muscles in Motion.

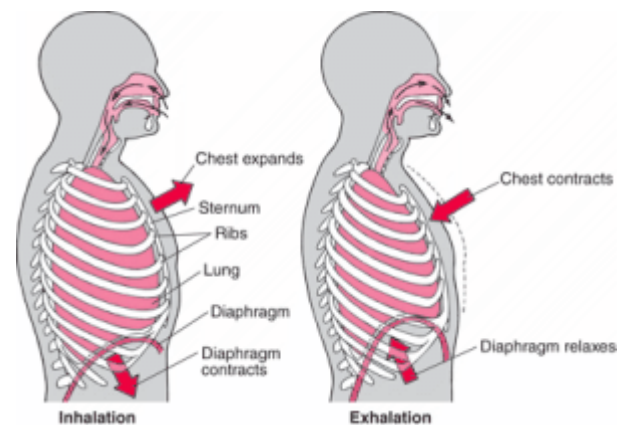
For example, when performing single leg circles, you must stabilize your powerhouse. By forgetting to anchor the torso to the floor and allowing the hips to lift off of the mat as you draw the circles, the exercise becomes inefficient and may cause injury.

How do I use my Diaphragm Correctly as I Perform the Exercises?

The diaphragm is a thin, parachute-shaped muscle originating at the sternum, lower 5 ribs (T8-T12), and upper 3 lumbar vertebrae (L1-L3). These muscle fibers travel up and toward the midline of your body and insert into the central tendon of the diaphragm.

The diaphragm contracts during **Inhalation**, causing the parachute to extend down and expand between the ribcage and abdomen, expanding the volume of the ribs and lungs, which drops the pressure, allowing air to enter. The diaphragm relaxes during **Exhalation**.

Engaging the Transversus Abdominus (TVA) muscles (deepest abdominal muscles) during Inhalation, the central tendon of the diaphragm becomes fixed, thereby expanding the ribcage in all directions without letting the shoulders rise.



What is the Pilates Stance?

Turn the feet out **slightly** into a 'V' position by initiating the movement from the hip joint. Keep the knees soft, but straight while squeezing the backs of the upper, inner thighs together—as if holding a tangerine between your legs. This allows your hip flexors to relax, while activating the often-undertoned inner thighs.

How Often Should I Practice? 3-4 times/week for 15-30 minutes is recommended.

Pelvic Tilts/Imprints (10-50 x)

Prep: Lie on mat with feet on floor hip-width apart, arms at sides. Rest your head on the mat, lengthening your neck to “neutral”. Keep a slight curve in your lumbar spine.

Exercise: **Inhale**, allowing a full chest expansion.

Exhale for five seconds, drawing your navel towards your spine and tucking your tailbone slightly, as if someone laid a heavy bag of flour on your belly. Start with 10-20 reps and gradually increase to 50.

Rollups (3-10x)

Prep: Lie on mat with knees bent and pressing together, arms at sides, palms down. Rest your head on the mat, lengthening your neck to “neutral”.

Exercise: **Inhale**, tuck chin, engage abs, rolling chin up over chest, chest over belly, belly over hips, with arms in front, parallel to floor.

Exhale, straighten legs, stretch forward pulling navel towards spine, feeling opposite pulls.

Inhale, tighten buttocks, slightly tuck tailbone, bend knees (press together).

Exhale, roll down one vertebrae at a time. When shoulder blades touch mat lower head to mat and lower arms to sides.

Advanced Rollups (3-10x)

Prep: Same as above with arms overhead and legs extended straight in Pilates stance.

Exercise: **Inhale**, engaging abs, lift arms up to sky, tuck chin, chin up over chest, chest over belly, belly over hips.

Exhale, stretch forward pulling navel towards spine.

Inhale, tighten buttocks, slightly tuck tailbone.

Exhale, roll down one vertebrae at a time. When shoulder blades touch mat lower head to mat and lower arms overhead.

Single Leg Circles (5-10x each leg, each direction)

Prep: Lie on mat with feet on floor hip-width apart, arms at sides. Lift right leg straight up to 90°. Turn hip out and point toes.

Exercise: **Inhale**, engage powerhouse, slowly draw a circle (face of clock) on the ceiling by bringing your leg across your body from 12pm down to 6pm.

Exhale, bring your leg outside your body, around and up from 6pm to 12pm. Do not allow your buttocks to move off of the mat or let your hips wobble side to side. Start by making small circles until you are able to increase the size with steadiness.

Repeat in the other direction, clockwise.

Change legs and repeat bringing leg across body first, and then outside body.

Single Straight-Leg Stretch (5-10x ea. leg)

Prep: Lie on back, pulling both knees to your chest with elbows extended and head lifted above chest.

Exercise: **Inhale**, extend Rt. Leg straight up, grabbing ankle or calf with both hands while extending Lt. leg straight out in front, just above the floor or higher, if needed.

Exhale, pull leg gently towards you, keeping lower back pressing into floor.

Inhale, switch legs

Exhale, pull leg gently towards you.

Double-Leg Kicks (3-5 sets)

Prep: Lie on belly with face resting to one side. Clasp hands behind back with fronts of shoulders and elbows touching mat. Squeeze buttocks and upper inner thighs together.

Exercise: **Inhale**, kick both heels to buttocks 3 times.

Exhale, extend legs down to mat with tops of feet pressing into mat, stretching your arms toward heels, lifting your upper body off the mat in an arched position

Inhale, reach long, squeezing shoulder blades together.

Exhale, return your body to mat, with face resting to other side, return heels to kicking position.

Cat/Cow Stretch (3-5x)

Prep: Kneel on mat, knees under hips, tops of feet resting on mat. Place hands on mat under shoulders.

Inhale, look up, lifting tailbone, creating a slight arch in the lower spine.

Exhale, pull navel towards spine, look down, tucking chin, tucking tailbone under, resembling a scared cat.

Dog Tail Wag (3-5x ea. side)

Prep: Kneel on mat, knees under hips, tops of feet resting on mat. Place hands on mat under shoulders.

Inhale, keeping neutral spine.

Exhale, bring head and tailbone towards each other on one side.

Inhale, return to neutral spine.

Exhale, bring head and tailbone towards each other on other side.

Extended Child's Pose (5-10 deep breaths)

From all fours, bring buttocks back to heels, keeping knees together for an increased stretch, or apart if low back is tight. Extend arms overhead, resting palms on mat.

Inhale, expanding belly into knees, allowing lower spine to stretch.

Exhale, letting body to sink into mat.

Sliding Down the Wall (3-5 x)

Prep: Stand with your back against a wall, feet hip-width apart, 6-10 inches away from wall.

Exercise: **Inhale**, slide down the wall by bending your knees, keeping them in line with your hips. Stop when you are in comfortable seated position without letting your hips drop below your knees. Hold your breath without straining. Maintain spinal contact with the wall throughout the exercise.

Exhale, press your feet into the floor as you slide back up the wall.

Uttanasana Against the Wall (Hamstring Stretch)

Prep: Stand with your feet hip-width apart, 6-10 inches away from a wall. Find your sitting bones (ischial tuberosities) and place them against the wall (spread the flesh to allow bones to contact wall). Engage quadriceps (front thigh muscles) as you extend spine forward and down, allowing your head to hang and arms to drop, still maintaining engagement of the quadriceps. Take several breaths, bend knees slightly, inhale slowly rolling spine up to neutral.

Single Quadricep Stretch

Lie on your belly, reaching behind to grab ankle. Pull ankle towards buttocks, keeping knee and ankle in line. Take several full breaths and switch legs.

Double Quadricep Stretch (Bow)

Lie on your belly, reaching behind to grab both ankles. Pull ankles towards buttocks, keeping knees and ankles in line. Take several full breaths as you pull ankles in while gently pressing ankles into hands.

Happy Baby Stretch

Lie on your back, pulling your knees towards your chest. Release and grab the outside edges of your feet. Gently pull one knee down towards one shoulder and switch sides. After several pulls on each side, pull both knees towards your shoulders while dropping your tailbone down towards the mat. Take several breaths.

3-Part Breath

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Place your hands on your lower abdominal region as you take several breaths, allowing your belly to rise up into your hands on each inhale. Place your hands around your side ribs and take several breaths, allowing your ribs to press into your hands. Place your hands on your chest and take several breaths, allowing your chest to press into your hands. Place one hand on belly and one on chest. Inhale, allowing the belly to rise, then the ribs to expand, and finally the chest to rise. Exhale, letting the chest fall, ribs to contract, and belly to fall. Take several more 3-part breaths.