

Beginner / Level 1 Pilates Exercises

Please note not all exercises are suitable for everyone; please consult your Doctor or Physiotherapist if you wish to try these exercises at home. Do not embark on an unsupervised home session before seeking advise from a qualified Pilates Instructor.

The instructions shown are in no way intended as a substitute for medical advice. The creators of this handout disclaim any liabilities or loss in connections with the exercises shown.

REMEMBER YOUR 6 SET UP POINTS!

- NECK - SHOULDERS - PELVIS PLACEMENT - PELVIC FLOOR – ABDOMINALS - BREATHING

The hundred – (Core strengthening) Start in table top position, lifting head off mat (optional) and beat arms: 5 x inhale, 5 x to exhale. Aim to achieve 100 beats.



The roll up – (Core strengthening, spine flexibility) Start position as in photo, inhale and tuck tailbone under and roll down onto mat, exhale to roll back up and repeat. Harder – extend arms in front or above head.



The one leg circle – (Hip mobility) Start position as shown in photo, circle raised leg from the hip (about size of dinner plate), inhale for one circle, exhale for one circle. Change circle directions and repeat with other leg. Easier – keep leg at table top and circle. Harder – Increase size of circles and/or extend opposite leg on floor.



Rolling like a ball – (Core strengthening, spine flexibility) Start position as shown in bottom photo, inhale to roll back on to shoulder blades as in top photo, exhale to roll forward again to start position. Keep it flowing. Repeat.



The one leg stretch – (Core strengthening) Start position as shown in photo then switch leg positions whilst switching hands onto your bent knee. Repeat. Easier – Keep head on mat and leave arms resting by your side / keep one foot on floor.



The double leg stretch – (Core strengthening) Start position as in photo and circle arms as wide as is comfortable. Inhale for one circle, exhale for one circle. Repeat and change directions.



The swan dive – (Upper back strengthening) Lie on the mat face down with arms bent and hands pointing forward, exhale and lengthen through your upper body causing a slight lift in your chest and head as in photo. Inhale then on exhale lower to start position. Repeat. Harder – hover hands off the floor when upper body extends.



The scissors – (Core strengthening) Start position as shown in photo, exhale and imagine you are dipping your raised toe into a puddle, ensuring angle at the knee stays the same throughout. Inhale and raise leg back to start position. Repeat. Harder – start with both legs in table top and scissor legs simultaneously.



The shoulder bridge – (Core strengthening, spine flexibility) Start in set up position, inhale to tuck tailbone under then exhale to peel up spine from mat into a bridge position as shown in photo. Inhale to hold, exhale to lower back into set up position. Aim to get each vertebra onto the mat one after the other. Repeat.



The spine twist – (Spine flexibility) Start position as in photo, inhale to prepare, exhale and rotate upper body around to the left as far as you can go ensuring head stays in line with the spine and your hips stay facing front. Inhale to return to centre and exhale to repeat on other side. Repeat whole exercise. Easier – Bring soles of feet and palms of hands together, bend knees and elbows. Position middle fingers under chin.



The side kick – (Core strengthening, thigh strengthening) Start position as shown in photo, sweep top leg forward on inhale, and sweep back on exhale. Repeat and perform on other side. Easier – Rest top hand on floor in front to support, or on hip / keep bottom leg bent.



Swimming, prone – (Lower back/glute strengthening) Lie face down on mat with hands palm down under forehead. Exhale and lengthen through one leg from the hip causing a small lift. Inhale and lower leg. Perform on other side and repeat whole exercise.

Swimming – (Back/core strengthening) From all fours position, exhale and extend out one arm and the opposite leg (as in photo), inhale to return arm to floor and knee to mat, exhale and extend the other arm and leg. Repeat.



The leg pull – (Core Strengthening) Start position as shown in photo, exhale and lift hips and tummy off mat so you are resting on your knees and forearms. Hold for several breaths. Harder – Adopt a full plank position and hold.



The side bend – (Core/upper body strengthening) Start position as shown in photo, inhale and lift hips from mat as if you are being hoisted up, resting on knees and hands, exhale to lower. Harder – When lifting hips extend top arm over your head or don't bring hips all the way back to the floor.



The push up – (Core/upper body strengthening, spine flexibility) From standing, roll down through spine on exhale aiming to touch your toes, then bend knees and lower down and move onto all fours, do a half press up by lowering chest towards mat on inhale and pushing up on exhale. Inhale back to crouched position, exhale to roll back up to standing – straightening legs first then spine.



Further modified exercises:

The Chest opener – (Chest stretch) Lie on your side with knees bent and arms extended in front of you with palms together. Inhale and raise your top arm across your body and lower it down towards the floor behind you whilst rotating your head at the same time so your eyes stay fixed on your moving arm. Exhale and bring the arm back across the body, rotating the head again and finally close palms. Repeat, and perform on other side.

Supine twists – (Core strengthening) Start position as in photo, keeping bottom on mat exhale and lower legs towards the floor on one side. Inhale and bring legs back to start position, exhale and lower legs to other side and inhale to return legs to table top. Repeat.



The dart – (Back strengthening, chest flexibility) Lie face down but keep arms to your sides palms up. Exhale and squeeze together shoulder blades raising head slightly off the mat but keeping neck long and rotate arms so palms now face the floor. Inhale and release shoulder blades lowering forehead back down to mat and rotating arms again so palms are face up. Repeat.

Hip opener – (Hip/inner thigh stretch) Lie on back with arms to sides, bring soles of feet together with knees bent and lower knees towards the floor opening the hips so you feel a stretch in the inner thighs. Hold for several breaths.