

# PILATES ARC<sup>®</sup>

A DETAILED GUIDE FOR PRACTICING PILATES

By Nora St. John

Co-Created by Elizabeth Larkam, Naomi Leiserson,  
Lizbeth Garcia, Nico Gonzalez, Portia Page and Valentin

3rd Edition

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## CREDITS AND GRATITUDE

This manual would not have been possible without the dedication and support of the Pilates elders who kept the work alive and growing, the teachers of all of the Balanced Body Master Instructors who so generously shared their knowledge and wisdom, Ken Endelman and Balanced Body for supporting the entire project and Turning Point Studios for providing the living laboratory out of which it all developed.

Also many thanks to Caleb Rhodes, Melissa Franzosa, and Portia Page for being such ideal models.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This Manual is intended to be used as part of a Pilates teacher training program or for clients who are working under the supervision of a trained Pilates teacher. If you are using this manual to learn these Pilates exercises and you are not under the supervision of a trained Pilates teacher please keep in mind that the material presented is physically challenging and Balanced Body is not liable for any injuries caused by attempting these exercises without proper supervision.

Balanced Body highly recommends that you get a thorough evaluation from a qualified health or fitness professional and work with a trained Pilates teacher in order to receive the maximum benefit from these exercises.

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# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF PILATES

## PILATES, MOVEMENT FOR LIFE!

Pilates helps thousands of people every day to move better, feel better and perform at their best. This wonderful exercise system developed by Joseph Pilates strengthens muscles, develops flexibility, increases coordination and improves health and well being.

## PILATES, MIND BODY EXERCISE

Pilates focuses on engaging the mind and body to create exercises that stimulate not just our physical bodies, but our mind and spirit as well. Every exercise is performed with attention to the breath, proper form, correct alignment and balanced muscle control in order to decrease pain, increase vitality and optimize physical performance.

Pilates is used in fitness centers, private studios, rehabilitation clinics and at home to improve the health and well being of everyone from the recently injured, to the super fit. As more and more people participate, Pilates continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of anyone wanting to improve their ability to move with strength, ease and grace.

## BALANCED BODY, GROWING PILATES FOR OVER 30 YEARS

Balanced Body is the largest designer and manufacturer of professional Pilates equipment in the world. Ken Endelman, the founder and CEO, is constantly inspired by his work with Pilates professionals from over 100 countries. He uses this inspiration to design and develop the finest Pilates equipment, and to help grow the Pilates community through education, advertising and continued support.

The education division of Balanced Body is committed to providing training and support for home users, new teachers and professionals through manuals, DVDs, Pilates teacher training programs and continuing education.

If you want to learn more about Pilates products, instructor training, or to find a Pilates professional near you, visit [pilates.com](http://pilates.com).

## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual contains a wealth of information about the Pilates method, principles of good movement and Pilates Arc and Step Barrel exercises. You can use it to deepen your own understanding of Pilates or as an additional resource if you are already a Pilates instructor or enrolled in a Pilates instructor training program. The exercises are organized as if you were doing a Pilates Mat workout on the Pilates Arc. If you are new to Pilates, start with the beginning level exercises and programs until you get comfortable with them, before advancing. If you have any specific issues, please consult a medical professional or an experienced Pilates instructor before attempting any of these exercises.

This manual grew out of the more than 60 years combined teaching experience of the Pilates Arc development team. It includes a selection of both classical and contemporary exercises including many new moves developed just for the Pilates Arc. The original Pilates exercises were passed on to us through the Pilates elders and master teachers Eve Gentry, Michele Larsson, Carola Trier, Romana Kryzanowska, Kathleen Stanford Grant, Ron Fletcher, Elizabeth Larkam, Jean-Claude West and many others. We are grateful for everything they have given us.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Balanced Body at [education@pilates.com](mailto:education@pilates.com).

I hope this manual provides you with both information and inspiration on your Pilates path.

Happy practicing!

Nora St. John

Education Program Director

Balanced Body

# WHAT IS PILATES?

Pilates is an exercise system developed by Joseph Pilates over 80 years ago. Exercises are performed on a mat or on specially designed Pilates equipment including the Reformer, the Trapeze Table or Cadillac, the Wunda chair, the Magic Circle and the Barrels. The Pilates system includes exercises for every part of the body and applications for every kind of activity. When Pilates first created his method, it was so far ahead of its time that it did not begin to achieve popular recognition until the first few years of the 21st century. Over 10 million people are now practicing Pilates in the United States and the numbers are growing every year.

## WHY IS PILATES SO POPULAR ?

Pilates focuses on engaging the mind and body together to create exercises that involve the whole person. Every exercise is performed with attention to the breath, proper form and efficient movement patterns. Pilates strengthens the core, improves balance, increases coordination and decreases stress. The exercises are relatively safe, low impact and appropriate for anyone from 10 to 100. Pilates focuses on learning to move better so the benefits are felt in everyday life.

Pilates is used in fitness centers, private studios, rehabilitation clinics and hospitals to improve the health and well being of clients from the recently injured to the super fit. As more and more people participate, Pilates continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of anyone wanting to improve their ability to move with strength, ease and grace.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF JOSEPH H. PILATES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTROLOGY

Joseph Hubertus Pilates was born in Germany around 1883. He had rheumatic fever, asthma and rickets as a child and was plagued by a weak respiratory system. In order to improve his own health he began exploring ways to strengthen his body and his mind. Early on, Joe became intrigued by the classical notion of the ideal man who combined a well trained body with an equally well trained intellect. In pursuit of this goal he participated in boxing, fencing, wrestling and gymnastics with his father and brother. Germany was a fertile ground for these explorations at the turn of the 20th century with many ground breaking leaders in movement science, dance and psychology working there.

Joe was in England touring with a boxer when World War I broke out. He was held as a resident alien in an internment camp on the Isle of Man for the duration of the war. While in the camp he took it upon himself to lead his fellow detainees in a daily exercise program. According to Joe, when the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 broke out, none of the inmates who followed his regimen got sick.

Joe's success with his group of inmates brought him to the attention of the camp leaders and he was given the job of an orderly at a hospital for wounded soldiers. He was put in charge of 30 patients and worked with them every day to exercise whatever they could move. This was in the days when western medicine was in its infancy and there were few treatments to offer patients other than surgery and morphine. Nursing during this time usually meant extended bed rest which lead to muscular atrophy, loss of aerobic capacity and a weakened immune system. Joe's exercises helped his patients to get better faster and helped them to fend off the secondary infections that killed so many people in similar circumstances.

Working as an orderly also led to the development of Joe's first piece of exercise equipment. Manually working out 30 patients every day was exhausting so Joe came up with the idea of attaching springs to the patient's bed frames and thus the first Cadillac was born! Now the patients could exercise themselves under Joe's supervision.

After Joe was released from the camps and returned to Germany, he was approached by the "brown shirts" (who were to become the Nazi party) to train their police force. Joe didn't want to have anything to do with them, so he left Germany on a boat for America and met his soon-to-be-wife Clara on the passage over. Clara was a nurse who became a true partner for Joe, working beside him in the studio everyday and taking care of any clients Joe didn't want to work with.

When Joe and Clara arrived in New York in 1926, they rented a small studio in the same building as the New York City Ballet on 8th Ave. and started teaching what Joe named "Contrology." Joe worked with clients from all walks of life but he made an especially strong impression on the dance community working with Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, George Balanchine and many others who sent their injured dancers to Joe's for rehabilitation following injuries.

Joe was an inventor who was always working on developing new exercise equipment. He designed the Universal Reformer, the Wunda Chair, the Cadillac, the Ladder Barrel, the Spine Corrector and many other wonderful inventions during his lifetime. He made many of the machines himself and often designed them to fit a particular client. Many of Joe's original machines are still working today.

Joe had a dream of introducing his vision of mind-body fitness into every aspect of life, from elementary schools to military training, and, had he not been so far ahead of his time, it might have happened. Instead, he taught a small group of devoted teachers and students, a few of whom went on to continue the work and keep it alive until the rest of the world caught up with his revolutionary thinking. Joe spent many years talking to anyone who would listen about his work, but did not receive much recognition during his lifetime.

Joe's studio was destroyed by fire in 1967 and he died soon after that from complications of smoke inhalation. His wife Clara carried on the work until her death in 1977.

Amongst the primary teachers who carried on Joe's work after his death was **Romana Kryzanowska**, a ballet dancer who worked very closely with Joe and taught at his studio for many years. She started one of the first teacher training programs in the country and has trained hundreds of instructors to teach the work as Joe taught it to her. She was associated with the Pilates Guild for many years and taught her Romana's Pilates training program up until her death in 2013.

**Eve Gentry** was a well known modern dancer who worked with Joe and Clara as a student and teacher for over 20 years before moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico and opening a studio there. Joe helped to rehabilitate Eve after a radical mastectomy and helped her to regain the full use of her arm and torso. Eve died in the late 1990s. Her work is carried on by Michele Larsson through Core Dynamics.

**Ron Fletcher** was a Martha Graham dancer who worked with Joe and Clara very late in their lives. Ron credits Clara with inspiring him to develop his unique work on the Step Barrel/Spine Corrector and to open a studio in Los Angeles on Rodeo Drive. Ron was the first teacher to bring Pilates to the West Coast and to introduce it to many famous actors and actresses. His work incorporated a more "dancerly" style and more complicated choreography into the original exercises. His work is carried on by the Ron Fletcher Program of Study and is known as Ron Fletcher Work.

**Carola Trier** trained with Joe and opened her own studio in New York where she taught until her death in the late 1990s. Her work is carried on by several senior students including Jillian Hessel in Los Angeles and Deborah Lessen in New York.

**Kathleen Stanford Grant** originally came to Joe with a knee injury she sustained as a dancer. She was one of only two students to be certified by Joe to teach Pilates. After dancing and choreographing for many years she started teaching at New York University where she taught a Mat class to the students and ran a small studio until her death in 2010.

**Lolita San Miguel** is a well known dancer and choreographer who was certified by Joe while she was dancing in New York. She moved to Puerto Rico and founded the Ballet Concierto de Puerto Rico, one of the island's premier dance companies where she incorporated Pilates into the training program for her dancers. Ms. San Miguel teaches Pilates workshops nationally and internationally and has produced several DVDs.

**Mary Bowen** was a comedian performing in New York when she first started working with Joe. She now combines Psyche and Pilates in her current life as a Jungian psychoanalyst and Pilates instructor at her studio in Northampton, MA and her office in Killingworth, CT. She has taken at least one Pilates session a week for close to 50 years and continues to deepen her own understanding of the balance between mind and body.

Pilates has now become a household word thanks to the work of all of these first generation teachers and many others who kept the method alive after the death of Mr. Pilates. Without them, we would not have the wonderful exercise system we have today. We are grateful to all of them.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF BALANCED BODY EDUCATION

The Balanced Body Pilates instructor training was developed by Nora St. John, MS. who has been practicing Pilates since 1981 and teaching since 1989. She originally trained at St. Francis Memorial Hospital with Patrice Whiteside and Elizabeth Larkam and has studied the work with Alan Herdman, Eve Gentry, Michele Larsson, Romana Kryzanowska, Carola Trier, Kathy Grant, Lolita San Miguel and Karen Clippinger. Nora has degrees in Biology, Dance and Traditional Chinese Medicine as well as certifications in Pilates, Oriental Bodywork and the Franklin Method.

The Balanced Body program combines the full bodied, athletic aspects of the original work with the refinement and anatomical understanding of the more contemporary schools of Pilates. Nora's background in movement science provides a strong foundation for the ongoing development of the Balanced Body Pilates instructor training program.

# PILATES PRINCIPLES

"Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness. Our interpretation of physical fitness is the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with a sound mind fully capable of naturally, easily, and satisfactorily performing our many and varied daily tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure. To achieve the highest accomplishments within the scope of our capabilities in all walks of life, we must constantly strive to acquire strong, healthy bodies and develop our minds to the limit of our ability". — **Joseph Hubertus Pilates**

## 1) BREATHING

"Breathing is the first act of life, and the last. Our very life depends on it."

The breath is the essential link between the mind and the body. It draws our wandering mind back into our bodies and back to the task at hand. It is the foundation of our existence and the rhythm that accompanies us from birth to death. In Pilates the breath is integrated into every movement in order to focus our awareness on what we are doing, to improve the flow of oxygen through our bodies and to improve the capacity of our lungs.

## 2) CONCENTRATION

"... and always keep your mind wholly concentrated on the purpose of the exercises as you perform them."

To concentrate is to pay attention to what you are doing. To be present with and in control of the task at hand. Without concentration the exercises lose their form and their purpose. When teaching it is important to have a client do only as many repetitions as they can without losing their concentration. As Joe often said, "It is better to do five repetitions perfectly than 20 without paying attention."

## 3) CONTROL

To be in control is to understand and maintain the proper form, alignment and effort during an entire exercise. Pilates exercises are never done without engaging the mind to control the movements and the efforts that the body is making.

## 4) CENTERING

In Pilates all movement radiates outward from the center. Developing a strong, stable and flexible center is one of the defining features of this form of exercise.

## 5) PRECISION

Precision is the ability to perform exercises with optimum alignment, unconscious control and just the right amount of effort. Precision is the end product of concentration, control, centering and practice.

## 6) BALANCED MUSCLE DEVELOPMENT

"However, there is another important reason for consistently exercising all our muscles; namely, that each muscle may cooperatively and loyally aid in the uniform development of all our muscles."

Understanding, developing and maintaining correct alignment and form is essential to Pilates and over time will lead to balanced muscle development. With practice these principles become second nature and lead to improved posture, increased comfort and enhanced physical abilities.

## 7) RHYTHM/FLOW

All movements in Pilates are done with a sense of rhythm and flow. Flow creates smooth, graceful and functional movements. It decreases the amount of stress placed on our joints and develops movement patterns that integrate our body into a smoothly flowing whole.

## 8) WHOLE BODY MOVEMENT

Pilates is fundamentally about integration: integrating movement into a flowing whole body experience, integrating the mind and body to create clarity and purpose, integrating mind, body and spirit to create a life of balance.

## 9) RELAXATION

To be healthy in body and mind it is important to understand the balance between effort and relaxation. In Pilates we learn to use just the amount of effort needed to complete the exercise correctly, no more, no less. Learning to release unnecessary tension in our bodies helps us to find ease and flow in movement and in the rest of our lives.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PILATES ARC®

## The Pilates Arc®

The Pilates Arc is based on the Step Barrel, or Spine Corrector designed by Joseph Pilates, to increase the strength of the core and the flexibility of the spine. The Pilates Arc is a lightweight, portable and inexpensive version of the original Step Barrel, making the wonderful exercises on this piece of equipment available to more people than ever before. The removable step, asymmetrical curve and ability to work on the top or the bottom of the arc means you can add exciting exercises into your classes or personal training sessions.

## THE ANATOMY OF THE PILATES ARC®

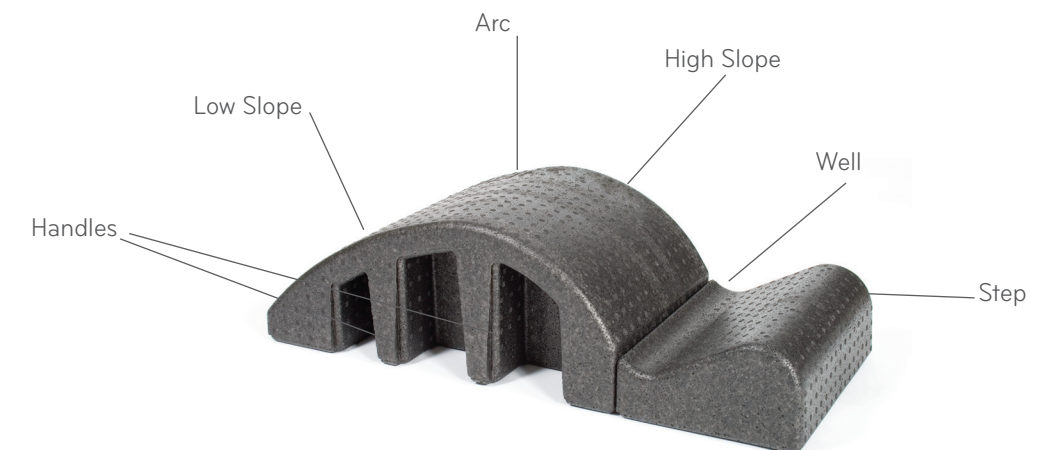
The Pilates Arc consists of

- ▶ A rounded surface called the arc or barrel that has an asymmetrical curve.
  - A more gentle curve on the low slope side
  - A sharper curve on the high slope side.
  - You can choose how much stretch or how much challenge you get by which side of the arc you use.
- ▶ A triangular piece called the step that can be detached from the Arc.
  - The high point of the triangular piece is called the step.
  - The low point where it meets the arc is called the well.
  - When sitting on the Pilates Arc, you might sit on the step, on the slope of the step or in the well.
- ▶ The side of the arc has several ribs which can be used as handles.
- ▶ The bottom of the arc has several ribs which can be used as handles when the arc is upside down.
  - The ribs that go from front to back are called the long ribs.
  - The short ribs that stick out of the sides of the long ribs are called the cross ribs.

## ADJUSTING THE PILATES ARC®

When Joseph Pilates designed the original Step Barrel, he customized the shape of the Barrel to the size and flexibility of the individual client.

- ▶ Because the Pilates Arc has an asymmetrical curve and removable step, you can adjust the exercise by choosing which end of the arc to work on.
- ▶ If you are particularly tall or short, you can adjust the fit of the arc using towels or sticky pads to support the head, the shoulders or the low back.
- ▶ If the Pilates Arc is too slippery or too firm, you can place a sticky pad or an exercise mat over the surface for comfort.
- ▶ In order keep the Pilates Arc from slipping and to pad the upper body when lying over the arc, place the arc on an exercise mat.









# THE REACH

BEGINNING | 10 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit in the well of the Pilates Arc®. Reach the arms forward with the knees bent, the feet on the floor and the legs in parallel.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Engage the abdominals and sit up tall.

**Exhale** – Draw the abdominals deep into the body until the low back contacts the arc. Roll back over the arc, straighten the legs and lift the hips out of the well as you raise the arms overhead. The low back and hips will extend as you reach back.

**Inhale** – Circle the arms out to the side and stretch the chest.

**Exhale** – Circle the arms forward, engage the abdominals, draw the chin into the chest and roll the torso up off the arc as the knees bend.

**Inhale** – Return to the starting position.



1. Reach – Starting Position



2. Roll down until the low back is on the arc



3. Extend the legs and reach the arms overhead as the torso leans over the arc.



4. Roll the upper body off the arc as the arms sweep down and forward. Reaching the arms forward as the upper body rolls off the arc



5. Return to the starting position

## MODIFICATION

### For tall people

Sit closer to the step or use a pillow or box to pad the head as the torso rolls back over the arc.

## CHALLENGES

Hold 1 to 5 lb hand weights to increase the work as the arms go overhead and circle around.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

▶ Narrow the pelvis and pull the sit bones together to begin the roll back.

• Imagine you have a drawstring around your pelvis and you are pulling the drawstring tight.

▶ Pull the navel to the spine.

• Suck the abdominals deep into the body.

▶ Place one vertebra down on the arc at a time.

• Imagine your spine is a string of beads.

▶ Peel the back off the barrel one section at a time.

• Imagine your back is a pancake that is being peeled off the arc.

▶ Open the chest as the arms circle up and around.

• Stretch the shoulders away from the sternum.

▶ Reach the legs out long as you stretch the torso over the arc in the Reach.

• Open the front of the body to the ceiling.

• Press the hips up toward the ceiling.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals
- ▶ Strengthen the back extensors
- ▶ Stretch the spine
- ▶ Stretch the anterior shoulder
- ▶ Stretch the anterior hip
- ▶ Increase lumbar flexibility
- ▶ Increase torso flexibility

## PRECAUTIONS

**Neck problems:** Avoid the Reach or support the head in the hands and limit the range of motion in the Roll Down.

**Back problems:** Be careful if you don't tolerate flexion or extension.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**

# THE HUNDREAD

BEGINNING | 10 PULSES

## STARTING POSITION

Sit between the well and the step of the Pilates Arc® with the back against the arc, the arms reaching toward the feet and the knees bent with the feet off the floor. Depending on the length of the torso and where you need support, your hips may be close to the step or down the slope toward the well.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Straighten the legs and reach the arms toward the hips keeping the lower back supported.

**Inhale/Exhale** – Pulse the arms 5 times as you inhale and 5 times as you exhale for a total of 10 breath cycles.

**Inhale** – Bend the knees and lower the upper body. Support the head with the hands if needed.



1. The Hundred – Starting Position



2. Reach the arms in line with the body and lower the legs

## MODIFICATIONS

### Feet on Floor

Keep the knees bent and the feet on the floor as the head and upper body roll up and the arms pulse.

### Chair Position

Keep the knees and hips bent at a 90 degree angle as the head and upper body roll up and the arms pulse.

### Legs Over Hips

Straighten the legs toward the ceiling as the head and upper body roll up and the arms pulse.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Lower the legs only as far as the torso can support them.
  - Place your hands behind your waist and see how far you can lower the legs before the back comes off your hands.
- ▶ Lift the head from the rib cage, not from the neck.
  - To lift the head, press the lower ribs into the arc and let them lift the head up.
- ▶ Keep the head tucked in to the chest, but not too far.
  - Imagine you are holding an orange between your chin and your chest as you roll up.
- ▶ Keep the torso steady as the arms pulse.
  - Imagine you have a cup of hot coffee on your abdomen. Don't spill it!
- ▶ Keep the elbows and wrists straight as you pulse.
  - Imagine you are slapping water.
  - Imagine your arms are hinged only at your shoulder.
- ▶ Breathe smoothly and steadily to maximize lung capacity.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Warm up the body
- ▶ Breathe deeply and fully into the lungs and torso
- ▶ Increase abdominal strength
- ▶ Teach stability of the torso and lower back
- ▶ Teach how to lift the head from the torso in abdominal exercises

## PRECAUTIONS

**For neck and shoulder injuries:** Choose an abdominal exercise where the head is supported by the hands.

**For low back injuries:** Be sure to keep the low back stable throughout the exercise. Avoid if it is uncomfortable.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**

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# SINGLE LEG STRETCH

BEGINNING | 10 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit between the well and the step of the Pilates Arc® with the back against the arc and the knees bent with the feet off the floor. Place the left hand on the inside of the right knee and the right hand on the outside of the right ankle and straighten the left leg. Keep the elbows wide and hold the leg at a height that allows the low back to remain stable. Keep the head up. Depending on the length of the torso and where you need support, your hips may be close to the step or down the slope toward the well.



1. Single Leg Stretch – Starting Position

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Release the leg held into the chest, straighten it out below you and pull the other leg in by placing the right hand on the inside of the left knee and the left hand on the outside of the left ankle. Pull the abdominals in as you bring the leg in. Keep the elbows wide and the back steady.

**Inhale** – Switch legs.



2. Switch the legs

## CHALLENGE

### Hands free

To challenge the abdominals, draw the leg in only until it forms a right angle with the hip and reach the arms toward the feet rather than pulling the knee in.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the shoulders down and the elbows wide.
- ▶ Keep your torso still.
  - Imagine you are holding a glass of your favorite beverage on your abdomen and don't spill it.
- ▶ Pull the abdominals deeper in with every repetition.
  - Don't let the abdominals rise!



1. Hands free challenge

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control
- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals

## PRECAUTIONS

**For neck and shoulder injuries:** Support the head with the hands.

**For low back injuries:** Be sure to keep your low back stable throughout the exercise. Avoid if it is uncomfortable.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**

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# DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

INTERMEDIATE | 4 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit between the well and the step of the Pilates Arc® with the back against the arc, both knees bent with the feet off the floor and the hands on the ankles. Depending on the length of the torso and where you need support, your hips may be close to the step or down the slope toward the well.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Reach the legs out straight and the arms up overhead without changing the curve of the upper body or the position of the lower back. Lower the legs only as far as you can before the back arches. Keep the arms in line with the ears.

**Exhale** – Draw the legs into the chest and sweep the arms around to hold the ankles.

## MODIFICATION

### Head support

Support the head with the hands and reach the elbows toward the knees to begin. Open the elbows out wide as the legs reach up toward the ceiling.

## CHALLENGES

### Advanced version

To challenge the abdominals, draw the legs in only until they form a right angle with the hips and place the hands lightly on the lower leg, rather than pulling the legs in toward the body.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep your torso still.
- ▶ Pull the abdominals in more deeply with every repetition.
  - Don't let the abdominals pooch!
- ▶ Keep the head and upper body in the same position throughout the exercise.
  - Maintain the position of the low back as the legs move.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control
- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals



1. Double Leg Stretch - Starting Position



2. Straighten the legs and reach the arms overhead



3. Return to the starting position

## PRECAUTIONS

**For neck and shoulder injuries:** Do the modified head support version only.

**For low back injuries:** Be sure to keep your low back stable throughout the exercise. Avoid if you are uncomfortable.

Avoid with osteoporosis.

# SINGLE STRAIGHT LEG STRETCH

BEGINNING | 10 SETS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit between the well and the step of the Pilates Arc® with the back against the arc, one leg reaching toward the ceiling and the other leg reaching toward the wall. Place the hands behind the leg that is reaching toward the ceiling. Place the hands as high as they can easily reach, but not directly behind the knee. Depending on the length of the torso and where you need support, your hips may be close to the step or down the slope toward the well.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Engage the abdominals and draw the leg closer to you. Pulse the leg two times with a short inhale on each one. This is called a sniffing breath.

**Exhale** – Switch the legs. Keep the torso still, the low back in place and the shoulders down with the elbows wide.

## MODIFICATIONS

### Head support

Support the head with the hands as you scissor the legs.

### Bent legs

If the hamstrings aren't flexible enough for the legs to be straight, bend the knees slightly throughout the exercise.

## CHALLENGE

### Hands off the leg

Take the hands off the leg and reach the arms toward the hips in line with the torso as the legs move.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep your torso still.
  - Imagine you are holding a glass of your favorite drink on your abdomen and don't spill it.
- ▶ Pull the abdominals in more deeply with every repetition.
  - Don't let the abdominals rise!
- ▶ Keep the head and upper body in the same position throughout the exercise.
  - Imagine you are holding an orange between your chin and your chest.
- ▶ Keep the shoulders down and the elbows wide.



1. Single Straight Leg Stretch - Pull the right leg in



2. Pull the left leg in

## PURPOSE

Develop pelvic stability and core control

Strengthen the abdominals

Increase the flexibility of the hamstrings

## PRECAUTIONS

**For neck and shoulder injuries:** Use the head support modification.

**For low back injuries:** Be sure to keep your low back stable throughout the exercise. Avoid if you are uncomfortable.

Avoid with osteoporosis.



# SPINE STRETCH

BEGINNING | 6 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit up on the step of the Pilates Arc® with the legs straight, shoulder width apart. Reach the arms out in front of the torso, level with the bottom of the sternum. Feel the center of the sit bones on the step and stay on top of them throughout the exercise.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Engage the abdominals, reach the arms forward and round the back until you are looking at the mat. Slide the shoulder blades up and over the rib cage as the arms reach forward without letting them come all the way up to the ears. Stay on top of your sit bones without tipping the pelvis forward.

**Exhale** – Draw the shoulder blades down the back as you line the spine back up over the hips.

Try reversing the breathing on this exercise by exhaling to roll forward and inhaling to roll back up. Notice how it changes the stretch in the back.

## CHALLENGE

### Hamstring stretch

Roll the torso all the way forward to increase the hamstring stretch.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Sit up on the very top of the sit bones.
  - Your sit bones are a mountain top, don't slide down either side.
- ▶ Engage the abdominals to lift the pelvis off the legs.
  - Imagine someone is holding your hips and lifting them up.
  - Imagine someone is pressing down on the top of your head and reach up to press their hand away.
- ▶ Keep the shoulder blades wide as you slide them up and over the rib cage.
  - Imagine your shoulder blades are like two curtains that are opening up to reveal the back of your rib cage.



1. Spine Stretch – Starting Position



2. Reach the arms forward and round the back keeping the hips anchored



1. Hamstring Stretch Challenge - Roll all the way forward

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Teach axial elongation
- ▶ Learn how to sit up tall with support
- ▶ Stretch the mid and upper back
- ▶ Increase the mobility of the shoulder blades
- ▶ Improve pelvic stability

## PRECAUTIONS

**For shoulder problems:** If the arms are uncomfortable at shoulder height, slide them along the floor as you round forward.

# SPINE STRETCH SIDE

BEGINNING | 6 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit up on the step of the Pilates Arc® with the legs straight and shoulder width apart. Reach the arms out in front of the torso level with the bottom of the sternum. Feel the center of the sit bones on the step and stay on top of them throughout the exercise.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Engage the abdominals, reach the arms out and lean over to one side, placing one hand on the floor. Keep the torso facing front as you lean over.

**Exhale** – Engage the abdominals and line the spine back up over the pelvis.

**Inhale** – Engage the abdominals, reach the arms out and lean over to the other side, placing one hand on the floor.

**Exhale** – Return to the starting position.

Try reversing the breathing on this exercise by exhaling to lean over and inhaling to sit back up. Notice how it changes the stretch.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Sit up on the very top of the sit bones.
  - Your sit bones are a mountain top, don't slide down either side.
- ▶ Keep both sit bones on the mat.
  - Imagine your hips are anchored in concrete.
  - Imagine your sit bones have grown roots down into the earth. Don't uproot them.
- ▶ Engage the abdominals to lift the pelvis off the legs.
  - Imagine someone is holding your hips and lifting them up.
  - Imagine someone is pressing down on the top of your head and reach up to press their hand away.
- ▶ Lengthen the side before leaning over.
  - Imagine you are arching over a large beach ball as you go to the side.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Learn how to sit with support
- ▶ Stretch the sides of the torso
- ▶ Improve pelvic stability



1. Spine Stretch Side– Starting Position



2. Lean to the side



3. Reach the top arm up to increase the side stretch

## PRECAUTIONS

**For shoulder problems:** If the arms are uncomfortable at shoulder height, slide the lower one along the floor as you lean over and hold the other one at the waist.





## Side Sit Ups with Rotation

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Place the hands behind the head with the elbows wide.

**Exhale** – Lean over the arc to stretch the side of the torso.

**Inhale** – Straighten the torso until the body is in one line from head to toe.

**Exhale** – Rotate the torso toward the floor.

**Inhale** – Rotate the torso slightly to the back.

**Exhale** – Rotate the torso back to the side position. Engage the side of the waist and lift the torso up to the starting position.

**Inhale** – Reach the top arm toward the floor and reach the bent arm up to the ceiling to stretch the other side.



1. Side Sit Ups with Rotation – Starting Position



2. Lean over the arc for the stretch then straighten the torso in line with the body.



3. Rotate the torso toward the floor



4. Rotate the torso toward the ceiling

### CHALLENGE

#### Bend both knees

To increase the challenge of the side sit up, bend both knees rather than keeping the top one straight.

### CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ To maximize the stretch, breathe into the top ribs in the stretch.
  - Imagine your rib cage is an accordion.
- ▶ Reach the leg to help lift the torso.
  - Imagine someone is pulling your leg as you lift the torso into the sit up position.
- ▶ Keep the shoulders and the hips in line, stacked right over each other.
  - Imagine you have a stake through the hips.
- ▶ Support the head in the bottom hand if needed.

### PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the oblique abdominals
- ▶ Strengthen the erector spinae and quadratus lumborum
- ▶ Stretch the lateral torso

### PRECAUTIONS

**Neck problems:** Avoid or support the head with the bottom arm.

**Back and sacroiliac joint problems:** Be careful if side stretches are uncomfortable.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**

# TEASER FORWARD

INTERMEDIATE | 3-5 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit between the well and the step of the Pilates Arc®, with the back against the arc and the legs straight.

**Back against low slope:** For an easier and more supported version of the Teaser forward series, remove the step and lean back against the low slope of the arc.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCES

### Teaser 1 - Torso only

**Inhale** – Roll the torso back over the arc, keeping the legs high and reaching the arms overhead.

**Exhale** – Reach the arms back to the Teaser position as you draw the chin into the chest and roll the torso up off the arc.

Repeat the torso roll down and up 4 times.

### Teaser 2 - Legs only

**Exhale** – Lift the legs off the step and reach the hands toward the feet to come into the Teaser position.

**Inhale** – Lower the legs.

**Exhale** – Lift the legs back up to the Teaser position.

Repeat the leg lowering and lifting 4 times.

### Teaser 3 - Arms and legs together

**Inhale** – Lower the legs and roll the torso over the arc as the arms reach overhead.

**Exhale** – Circle the arms around as the legs lift, the chin draws into the chest and the torso rolls up off the arc into the Teaser position.

Repeat the opening and closing of the torso 2 times.

## MODIFICATIONS

**Knees bent:** If you have tight hamstrings or a weak lower back, keep the knees bent throughout the exercise.



1. Teaser Forward – Starting Position - Hips in the well



2. Teaser 1 - Roll the torso back over the arc



2. Teaser 2 - Lower the legs toward the floor



2. Teaser 3 - Lower the torso and the legs together

## Bookends

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Keeping the torso up, open and close the legs or the arms and the legs together.



1. Bookends – Starting Position



2. Open the legs

## Scissors

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

With the torso up, lower one leg toward the floor as you lift the other leg. Alternate legs 3 times.



1. Scissors – Lower one leg toward the floor and lift the other to the ceiling



2. Switch the legs

## Diamond Legs

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Turn the legs out, bend the knees and press the heels together. Keeping the knees bent at the same angle, raise and lower the legs keeping the torso up.



1. Diamond Legs – Starting Position



2. Lower the legs toward the floor

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the low back in neutral when you are at the top of the Teaser.
  - Feel equal effort on the front and the back of the torso.
  - If your torso is a sandwich with the spine being the filling, and the abdominals and back muscles being the bread, your bread slices are exactly the same width.
- ▶ Find the perfect balance point between the sit bones and the tailbone.
  - Imagine your hips are rooted to the floor while your head and feet are suspended from the ceiling.
  - Sink the femurs into the hips to stabilize the legs.
- ▶ Move smoothly from one position to the next.
  - Momentum makes it easy. Moving with slow precision makes it much harder.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals
- ▶ Strengthen the hip flexors
- ▶ Stretch the spine

## PRECAUTIONS

**Low back problems:** Use the forward position to support the low back or avoid.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**





# TEASER REVERSE

INTERMEDIATE | 3-5 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Sit between the step and the well of the Pilates Arc® with the back of the legs against the arc and the legs straight. Reach the hands toward the feet to come into the Teaser position.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Lower the legs and lean the torso back.

**Exhale** – Reach the arms toward the feet and lift the torso back up to the Teaser position.

## VARIATIONS

### Arms Overhead

As the legs lower, lean the torso back and reach the arms overhead.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the low back in neutral when you are at the top of the Teaser.
  - Feel equal effort on the front and the back of the torso.
  - If your torso is a sandwich with the spine being the filling, and the abdominals and back muscles being the bread, your bread slices are exactly the same width.
- ▶ Find the perfect balance point between the sit bones and the tailbone.
  - Imagine your hips are rooted to the floor while your head and feet are suspended from the ceiling.
  - Sink the femurs into the hips to stabilize the legs.
- ▶ Move smoothly from one position to the next.
  - Momentum makes it easy. Moving with slow precision makes it much harder.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals
- ▶ Strengthen the hip flexors
- ▶ Stretch the spine

## PRECAUTIONS

**Low back problems:** Use the forward position to support the low back or avoid.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**



1. Teaser Reverse – Starting Position



2. Lower the legs and the torso



3. Return to the starting position



1. Variation: Arms Overhead

# BRIDGE

BEGINNER | 3-5 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Lie supine with the back on the mat and the low slope of the Pilates Arc® against the bottom of the hips. Place both feet on the arc.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Draw the abdominals in, engage the gluteals and hamstrings and roll the hips and spine off the mat. Don't roll any higher than the top of the shoulder blades.

**Inhale** – Hold the hips steady.

**Exhale** – Roll the back down onto the mat to return to the starting position.



1. Bridging – Starting Position



2. Press the hips up toward the ceiling

## MODIFICATION

### Flat back

To decrease lumbar flexion and increase gluteal and hamstring engagement, press the hips up toward the ceiling with a flat back rather than rounding the spine to roll up.

## CHALLENGES

### Marching

Lift one foot off the arc, keeping the hips steady. The free leg can be bent or straight. Alternate legs.



1. Marching - Lift one foot off the arc



2. Lift the other foot off the arc

### Shoulder Bridge

Lift one foot off the arc and straighten the leg toward the ceiling with a pointed foot. Flex the foot and lower the leg toward the arc. Lift the leg back up toward the ceiling. Bend the knee and place the foot back on the arc. Alternate sides.



1. Shoulder Bridge - Lift one leg up toward the ceiling



2. Flex the foot and lower it toward the arc

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the weight off the neck.
  - Support yourself on the top of your shoulder blades and upper back.
  - Pad the upper back, if necessary, to keep pressure off the neck.
- ▶ Press the hips up to the ceiling smoothly and evenly.
  - Imagine you have a ball balanced on your pelvis. Don't let it roll off.

- ▶ Keep the hips level as the leg lifts and lowers.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the hip extensors, including the hamstrings and gluteals
- ▶ Improve pelvic stabilization

## PRECAUTIONS

**Neck problems:** Pad the upper back to keep pressure off the neck or avoid.

**Low back problems:** Must tolerate extension, otherwise avoid.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**

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# PUSH UP

BEGINNING | 10 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Place the hands on the Pilates Arc® either right side up or upside down. Straighten out the torso until you are in a solid plank position with the shoulders over the wrists, the inner thighs together and the torso in one line from head to feet.

### Arc Right Side Up

Place the hands on the step or on the top of the arc. The higher the shoulders are over the hips, the easier the exercise is, so if the hands are on the top of the arc, it is easier than with the hands on the step, which is a little easier than if the hands are on the ground.

### Arc Upside Down

With the Pilates Arc® upside down, the arc becomes an unstable surface, requiring more scapular stability in the plank or push up position. This is generally harder than with the arc right side up.

Take the step off the Pilates Arc® and turn the arc over so the round side is on the floor. The shape of the arc provides different challenges depending on where you place your hands. Hand positions include:

- ▶ Arc long ways, low slope towards you: Place the hands on the cross ribs that are closest to you for the most stability. Place your hands on the long ribs in the middle of the arc for less stability.
- ▶ Arc long ways, high slope towards you: Place the hands on the cross ribs that are closest to you for a moderate amount of mobility.
- ▶ Arc crossways: Place the hands on the long ribs towards the ends of the arc. This position creates an asymmetrical curve that will challenge each arm differently, so be sure to do the exercises with the arc facing in both directions.

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1 Push Up – Starting Position - Top of arc



1 Push Up – Starting Position - Step



1. Push Up – Starting Position - Bottom of Arc, low slope



1. Push Up – Starting Position - Bottom of Arc, high slope, closest rib



1. Push Up – Starting Position - Bottom of Arc, crossways

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Bend the elbows and lower the torso in one line toward the arc.

**Exhale** – Straighten the elbows to return to the starting position.



1 Push Up – Starting Position - Top of arc



2. Push Up – Bend the elbows

## ARC UPSIDEDOWN VARIATIONS

### Stable arc

Regardless of which hand position you choose, keep the arc stable as you bend and straighten the elbows.

### Mobile arc

Hold the plank position stable as you rock the arc from high slope to the low slope. Move slowly and with control to avoid losing balance.

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## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the torso in one line from head to feet.
  - Imagine you have a bar on the back of your body and it is touching your head, upper back, hips and heels.
- ▶ Don't stick your butt out.
- ▶ Keep the shoulders relatively stable as you raise and lower the torso.
- ▶ Keep your shoulders over your wrists.
- ▶ Keep your head looking directly in front of the hands.
- ▶ Don't drop it forward as you lower the torso.

## PURPOSE

Strengthen the entire body, including the core, scapular stabilizers and lumbopelvic stabilizers

Strengthen the triceps and the pectoralis major.

## PRECAUTIONS

**Wrist injuries:** Use the hand positions with the arc right side up or use push up handles or hand weights on the floor. If none of these positions are tolerated, then avoid the exercise.

# LEG PULL DOWN

INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED | 4-10 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Place the hands on the Pilates Arc® with the front of the body facing the floor. Straighten out the torso until you are in a solid plank position with the shoulders over the wrists, the inner thighs together and the torso in one line from head to feet.

### Arc Right Side Up (Intermediate)

- ▶ Hands on the top of the arc
- ▶ Hands on the step

### Arc Upside Down (Advanced)

- ▶ Arc long ways, low slope towards you
- ▶ Arc long ways, high slope towards you
- ▶ Arc crossways

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Lift one leg up toward the ceiling with the foot pointed and pulse it two times. Flex the standing foot and move the torso back toward the feet as the leg pulses. Keep the torso in line and the hips level throughout the exercise.

**Exhale** – Lower the leg back to the mat.

Repeat to the other side.

Do a total of 4 to 6 sets on each leg, alternating sides.



1. Leg Pull Down – Starting Position - Top of arc



2. Lift the right leg up

## VARIATIONS

### Stable Arc

Regardless of which hand position you choose, keep the arc stable as you lift and lower the legs.



1 Leg Pull Down – Starting Position - Stable arc, crossways



2. Lift one leg up

### Moving Arc

Place the arc long ways and hold on, so the arc is unstable. Rock the arc forward and back slightly as you raise and lower the legs.



1. Moving Arc - Rock the arc back as you lift one leg



2. Moving Arc - Rock the arc forward as you lift the other leg

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the torso in one line from head to feet.
  - Imagine you have a bar on the back of your body and it is touching your head, upper back, hips and heels.
- ▶ Don't stick your butt out.
- ▶ Don't drop the hips as the leg lifts.
  - Imagine you are balancing a board across your hips and you have two cups of tea on the ends of the board. Don't spill them as the leg lifts.
- ▶ Keep your shoulders over your wrists.
- ▶ Keep your head looking directly in front of the hands.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the entire body, including the core, scapular stabilizers and lumbopelvic stabilizers
- ▶ Strengthen the hip extensors, including the hamstrings (biceps femoris, semitendinosus, semimembranosus), and gluteus maximus

## PRECAUTIONS

**Wrist injuries:** Use the hand positions with the arc right side up or use push up handles or hand weights on the floor. If none of these positions are tolerated, then avoid the exercise.



# LEG SERIES ON THE ARC

BEGINNING | 4-10 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

With the Pilates Arc® you can use either the low slope or the high slope for these exercises. Take the step off to use the high slope. The low slope is gentler and puts less pressure on the neck. The high slope is more advanced and more challenging for the neck and the back flexibility.

To get into the starting position, sit on top of the arc or in the well, hang onto the handles and, using the abdominals, slowly roll back off the arc until the shoulders and head are on the mat.

Another way to get into the starting position that works well for taller and stronger clients: Lie on your back with your butt at the low slope end of the arc and your hands on the handles. Reach the legs up to the ceiling and roll up into the Roll Over position from the Mat. Pull the Pilates Arc towards you until it contacts the low back. Lower the hips onto the arc.

If you are short, pad the mat at the end of the arc to support the head. The hips should be firmly supported by the arc and there should be no pressure on the neck.



1. Starting Position - Low slope

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## Scissors

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Alternately extend one leg to the floor as the other leg lifts up toward your head.
- The breathing pattern can be one inhale and one exhale for every complete set or one inhale per set.



1. Scissors - Split the legs



2. Switch the legs

## Bicycle

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Move the legs in a bicycling motion, focusing on opening up the hips as much as possible. Bicycle the legs in both directions.



1. Bicycle - Split the legs



2. Bend one knee and reach the foot toward the step



3. Bring the bent knee in to the chest as the other leg reaches toward the step



4. Straighten the bent knee and reach the other out to begin on the second side.

## Bookends

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Begin with both legs up toward the ceiling with the knees straight. Open the legs out to the side and close the legs.



1. Bookends - Starting Position



2. Open the legs

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## Circles

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Begin with both legs together, circle them out and around until the legs come to the center line. Bring the legs up through the center and back to the starting position. Circle in each direction. Circles can be large or small.



1. Circles - Starting Position



2. Open the legs



3. Circle the legs around



4. Bring the legs together to start again

## Pendulum

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Begin with both legs up toward the ceiling with the knees straight. Tilt the legs to one side, allowing the opposite hip to lift off the arc. Return to the center and tilt to the other side. Keep the shoulders steady and the upper back from rocking.



1. Pendulum - Swing the legs to one side



2. Swing the legs to the other side

## Frogs

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Turn the legs out and bend the knees keeping the heels together. Straighten the legs by squeezing the inner thighs. Repeat.



1. Frogs - Starting Position



2. Straighten the legs

## Beats

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Turn the legs out with the heels together. Cross one leg in front of the other and then switch. Keep the legs at one height or raise and lower them as you cross and recross the legs.



1. Beats - Starting Position



2. Recross the legs as you lower them down toward the mat



3. Continue to recross until the legs are as low as they can go

## Helicopter

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Begin with one leg in line with the torso and the other leg pointing toward the ceiling. Circle the legs in opposite directions, keeping the toes on a plane parallel to the floor until the legs bump into each other. Circle back in the opposite direction.



1. Helicopter - Starting Position



2. Scissor the legs



3. Circle the legs in opposite directions



4. Until you can't go any farther

### MODIFICATIONS

#### Beginning Version

- Do the entire set of exercises with the hips on a baby arc or foam roller for a beginning version.

### ARC DISMOUNTS

- ▶ To get off the arc, push the arc out from under the hips and roll to one side.
- ▶ Alternatively you can slide or walk the shoulders away from the arc until the hips are on the ground and then roll to one side.

### CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the weight off the neck.
  - Support yourself on the top of your shoulder blades and upper back.
- ▶ Keep the hips balanced on the top of the arc throughout.
  - Don't rock and roll the hips.
- ▶ Reach the legs as far as is comfortable in each exercise.
  - Imagine your legs are being pulled away from your center.
  - Imagine you are drawing lines with your toes on the ceiling.

### PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the adductors
- ▶ Strengthen the hip flexors
- ▶ Stretch the adductors, hamstrings and hip flexors

### PRECAUTIONS

**Neck problems:** Pad the upper back to keep pressure off the neck or avoid.

**Low back problems:** Must tolerate flexion, otherwise avoid.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**





# SWIMMING

ADVANCED | 3-5REPS

## MODIFICATION

**For discomfort when lying on the greater trochanter**  
Pad around the greater trochanter to take the pressure off.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the shoulders and the hips lined up throughout the exercise.
  - Imagine you have a cup of coffee balanced on your shoulder. Don't spill it!
  - Imagine you have a stake through the hips and you can't break it.
- ▶ Keep the abdominals engaged.
  - Scoop the navel toward the spine as the leg goes up.
- ▶ Press the arm into the mat to keep the underside of the body engaged.
- ▶ Reach the leg away from the hip as it goes up.
  - Imagine you are painting a line on the wall.
  - Keep the waist long on the top side of the torso as the leg goes up.
- ▶ Lift the leg, not the hip.
- ▶ Crease at the top of the femur, not at the waist.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the hip abductors, including the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, gluteus minimus and tensor fascia lata
- ▶ Strengthen the hip external rotators, including the gluteus maximus, piriformis, obturator internus and externus, gemellus inferior and superior and quadratus femoris
- ▶ Strengthen the lateral torso, including the latissimus dorsi, internal and external obliques and quadratus lumborum
- ▶ Develop stability of the torso and pelvis in side lying

## PRECAUTIONS

**Neck, shoulder, elbow and wrist injuries:** Avoid if they don't tolerate the position of the upper body.

**Hip injuries:** Limit the range of motion and the number of repetitions or avoid if it is too uncomfortable.

**Lateral hip and greater trochanter pain or discomfort:**  
Create a hole for the greater trochanter to sit in by padding around it.

## STARTING POSITION

**On Top of the Arc:** Lie on top of the arc, facing away from the seat with the weight balanced between the upper and lower body. Reach the arms over head and the legs out long. Depending on your body proportions, the hips or abdomen may be on the top of the arc.

**On the Bottom of the Arc:** Remove the step, turn the arc over and place it so the high slope is closest to you. Lie prone with the arms overhead to find your balance point. Keep the arc steady throughout the exercise.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ From the starting position, alternately reach one arm and the opposite leg away from the center of the body and up toward the ceiling while maintaining your balance.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the center still as the limbs move.
  - Imagine you have a water glass on the small of your back. Don't spill it.
  - Don't rock the hips from side to side.
- ▶ Reach the legs out first, then up.
  - Imagine your legs are reaching to the walls before lifting up.
- ▶ If you are lying on the bottom of the arc, keep it still as you move the arms and legs.
  - Imagine your legs are reaching to the walls before lifting up
- ▶ Keep the rhythm even through all four limbs.

## MODIFICATIONS

### Hand and foot stabilization

As one arm and opposite leg reach up and away from the body, allow the other arm and opposite leg to touch the floor for stability.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the back extensors
- ▶ Strengthen the hip extensors
- ▶ Improve pelvic stability

## PRECAUTIONS

**Low back problems:** Must tolerate extension or avoid.



1 Swimming – Starting Position - Top of Arc



2. Lift one leg and the opposite arm



3. Alternate lifting opposite limbs



1. Swimming - Modification



1. Swimming – Bottom of Arc

# SWAN

ADVANCED | 3-5 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

**On Top of the Arc:** Lie on top of the Pilates Arc®, facing away from the seat with the weight balanced between the upper and lower body. Place the hands on the floor to begin.

Alternatively, you can lie facing the seat with the hands on the step to begin.

**On the Bottom of the Arc:** Remove the step, turn the arc over and place it so the high slope is closest to you. Lie prone with the arms on the floor. Use a sticky pad on the arc to keep the body from sliding.

## Swan

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Use the hands to press up into a long back extension.

**Exhale** – Bend the elbows to return to starting position

### MODIFICATION

#### On the bottom of the arc

Use the arms to rock back and forth on the arc to create a gentle back extension. Lift the legs as you rock forward to increase the extension.

## Swan Dive

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Use the hands to press up into a long back extension.

**Exhale** – Lower the torso toward the floor. Maintain the long back extension as you rock forward on the arc.

### CHALLENGE

#### Swan Rocking

Release the arms and rock forward on the arc. Catch yourself on your hands each time you rock forward.

### CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the abdominals engaged throughout.
  - No sagging stomachs.
- ▶ Keep the back of the body in one smooth bow throughout the exercise.
  - Imagine you are a rocking horse rocker.
  - Keep the legs reaching up.

- ▶ Keep the shoulders down and wide and the neck long throughout.
- ▶ Engage the back, gluteals and hamstring while keeping the torso long and without compressing the lower back.

### PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the back and hip extensors

### PRECAUTIONS

**Low back problems:** Must tolerate extension or avoid.

**Wrist, elbow and shoulder problems:** Limit number of reps or avoid.



1. Swan – Starting Position on top of the Arc



2. Bend the elbows and lower the torso toward the floor



1 Swan – Starting Position on the bottom of the Arc



2. Bend the elbows and lower the torso toward the floor

# SINGLE LEG KICK

INTERMEDIATE | 10 - 20 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Remove the step, turn the arc over and place it so the high slope is closest to you. Lie prone with your hands on the floor and your elbows bent. Straighten the legs and point the feet to begin.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Bend one knee and pulse the heel toward the buttocks two times with a sniffing breath. Keep the heel in line with the sit bones and the hips in place. Don't point the toes out to the side as the leg comes in, or let the front of the hips lift off the mat.

**Exhale** – Extend the leg back to the starting position.

Alternate sides.

## CHALLENGES

Add pointing and flexing to the foot work to challenge coordination and memory.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the shoulders down and wide and the neck long throughout the exercise.
  - Focus the eyes a few inches in front of the hands.
- ▶ Keep the abdominals engaged throughout.
  - No sagging stomachs.
- ▶ Keep the lower leg in line with the thigh.
  - Imagine you have a spring attached from your buttock to your heel.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen serratus anterior
- ▶ Strengthen the hamstrings
- ▶ Stretch the quadriceps
- ▶ Strengthen back extensors, hamstrings and gluteals
- ▶ Improve scapular stability
- ▶ Teach axial elongation in extension
- ▶ Teach abdominal support in extension



1. Bend the left knee



2. Bend the right knee

## PRECAUTIONS

**Low back injuries:** Engage the abdominals and press the pubic bone into the mat to decrease the pressure on the lower back. If the client still gets a punching sensation in the lower back, lower the torso or avoid.

**Knee problems:** Limit the range of motion in knee flexion. Stretching the quadriceps before this exercise can be helpful at decreasing knee discomfort.

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# ROLLING IN & OUT

ADVANCED | 6 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

With the Pilates Arc® you can use either the low slope or the high slope for these exercises. The high slope provides the most support in the inverted position, because the torso doesn't have very far to go to roll onto it. The low slope is more challenging and requires more core strength. Lie with the hips and the spine, up to the shoulder blades, on the arc. The knees are bent to 90 degrees. To get into this position, see Leg Series on page 52 for mounting and dismounting instructions.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Roll the lower back off the Pilates Arc bringing the knees in toward the head. Keep the hips lifting up and out of the shoulders as the torso rolls back.

**Inhale** – Roll back onto the arc, allowing the hips and knees to open to 90 degrees.

## ARC DISMOUNT

See Leg Series on the Arc on page 54 for dismounting instructions.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the weight off the neck.
  - Support yourself on the top of your shoulder blades and upper back.
  - Pad the upper back if necessary to keep pressure off the neck.
- ▶ Roll on and off the arc with control.
  - Move smoothly from position to position.
- ▶ Engage the abdominals and lift the torso toward the ceiling as the torso rolls back and forward.
  - Reach your sit bones toward the ceiling as you roll off the arc.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals
- ▶ Stretch the back

## PRECAUTIONS

**Neck problems:** Pad the upper back to keep pressure off the neck or avoid

**Low back problems:** Must tolerate flexion otherwise avoid.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**



1. Rolling – Starting Position



2. Roll the torso off the arc onto the shoulders



3. Roll the torso back down onto the arc

# JACKKNIFE

ADVANCED | 4-6 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

With the Pilates Arc® you can use either the low slope or the high slope for these exercises. The high slope provides the most support in the inverted position, because the torso doesn't have very far to go to roll onto it. The low slope is more challenging and requires more core strength. Lie with the hips on the slope and the legs straight up toward the ceiling. To get into this position, see Leg Series on page 52 for mounting and dismounting instructions.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Roll the lower back off the arc bringing the legs overhead and parallel to the ground. Keep the hips lifting up and out of the shoulders as the torso rolls back. Do not roll up on to the neck!

**Inhale** – Lower the legs toward the floor above your head keeping the sitting bones reaching toward the ceiling.

**Exhale** – Roll down, to return to the starting position. Keep the legs reaching as high as possible as the torso rolls down to the arc.

## MODIFICATIONS

### Tight hamstrings

Soften the knees when the legs are at the top of the move if the hamstrings and low back are tight.

## VARIATIONS

### Roll Over (no photos)

- ▶ Roll the lower back off the arc bringing the legs overhead and parallel to the ground. Keep the hips lifting up and out of the shoulders.
- ▶ Flex the feet, open the legs the width of the arc and roll the torso down to the arc.
- ▶ Circle the legs around and together to return them to the starting position

### Corkscrew (no photos)

- ▶ Roll up off the mat with the legs overhead and parallel to the floor. Do not roll onto your neck.
- ▶ Shift the weight slightly toward one side of the spine allowing the hips and legs to rotate. Roll down on that side of the spine.
- ▶ Circle both legs across to the other side, making sure the spine is centered on the arc when you are on the midline.
- ▶ Shift the weight slightly to the other side of the spine and roll up on that side.
- ▶ Come to the midline with the legs overhead. Change directions.



1. Jackknife Starting Position



2. Roll the lower back off the arc, bringing the legs overhead



3. Lower the legs toward the floor.



4. Press the legs straight up toward the ceiling

# ROLLING LIKE A BALL

BEGINNING | 1 - 3 REPS

## STARTING POSITION

Remove the step, turn the arc over and place it so the high slope is closest to your hips. Lie supine with your feet on the floor, legs in parallel and the knees bent. If you are tall or the torso is too long for the arc, support the head with the hands. If you are short, you may be more comfortable with the high point of the arc under the torso rather than the hips.



1. Rolling like a Ball - Starting Position

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ From the starting position, gently rock the torso back and forth by pressing the feet into the mat.

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Rock smoothly and gently.
- ▶ Use this exercise to relax the body at the end of a session.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Relax the torso
- ▶ Calm the nervous system

## PRECAUTIONS

As long as the torso is comfortable lying supine on the arc, this should be a safe exercise.



2. Rock the torso forward toward the feet



3. Rock the torso back away from the feet

# PILATES ARC® EXERCISE SEQUENCES

## Introductory Session

The introductory session provides a full-bodied workout while introducing the key Pilates principles of breathing, pelvic and scapular stability, abdominal strengthening and alignment. It also covers several of the basic body positions used on the Pilates Arc®. Practice this sequence three times a week for an invigorating workout.

### Mermaid/Side Sit Ups

- ▶ Breathing into the sides of the ribs - 6x on each side

### Step Roll Downs

- ▶ Deep Scoop - 8x
- ▶ Deepen the curve - 6x

### Well Roll Downs

- ▶ Hands behind the head - 10x

### Bridging

- ▶ Bridging - 6x

### The Hundred

### The Reach - 6x

### Leg Series on the Arc

- ▶ Scissors - 10x
- ▶ Circles - 6x
- ▶ Bicycle - 6x

### Single Leg Stretch - 8 sets

### Single Straight Leg Stretch - 8 sets

### Spine Stretch - 6x

### Spine Stretch Side - 6x

- ▶ Saw - 6x

### Teaser Forward

- ▶ Teaser 1 - 5x

### Side Leg Series - on top of arc

- ▶ Side Leg Lifts - 8 sets
- ▶ Circles - 8 circles each direction
- ▶ Leg Kicks - 8 sets

### Push Up - on top of arc

- ▶ Plank - 30 seconds
- ▶ Push ups - 4x - 10x

### Swan - on bottom of arc - 6x

### Swimming - on bottom of arc - 30 sets

### Rolling like a ball - 10x

# PILATES ARC® EXERCISE SEQUENCES

## Pilates Mat on the Arc - Beginner

Combining the Pilates Arc® with the Pilates Mat exercises provides a wonderful workout that allows you to add spice to your Mat class. The Arc provides both support and challenge, depending on how you use it.

- Mermaid/Side Sit Ups
    - ▶ Breathing into the sides of the ribs - 6x on each side
  - Step Roll Downs
    - ▶ Deep Scoop - 8x
    - ▶ Deepen the curve - 6x
  - Well Roll Downs
    - ▶ Hands behind the head - 10x
  - Bridging
    - ▶ Bridging - 6x
    - ▶ Marching - 6x
  - The Hundred - 1 set
  - The Reach - 6x
  - Leg Series on the Arc
    - ▶ Scissors - 10x
    - ▶ Circles - 6x
    - ▶ Bicycle - 6x
  - Single Leg Stretch - 8 sets
  - Double Leg Stretch - 6x
  - Spine Stretch- 6x
  - Spine Stretch Side - 6x
- Saw - 6x
  - Swan - on bottom of arc - 6x
  - Single Leg Kick - on bottom of arc - 8 sets
  - Swimming - on bottom of arc - 30 sets
  - Single Straight Leg Stretch - 8 sets
  - Criss Cross - 8 sets
  - Teaser Forward
    - ▶ Teaser 1 - 5x
  - Side Leg Series - on top of arc
    - ▶ Side Leg Lifts - 8 sets
    - ▶ Circles - 8 circles each direction
    - ▶ Leg Kicks - 8 sets
  - Rolling like a ball - 10x
  - Push Up - on top of arc
    - ▶ Plank - 30 seconds
    - ▶ Push ups - 4x - 10x
  - Roll up to standing

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## Pilates Mat on the Arc - Intermediate

The intermediate workout increases the abdominal challenge and the upper body challenge on the Pilates Arc®. It is a great warm up for the core and great strength training for the whole body.

- Mermaid/Side Sit Ups
    - ▶ Breathing into the sides of the ribs - 6x on each side
    - ▶ Side Sit ups - 8x on each side
  - Step Roll Downs
    - ▶ Deep Scoop - 8x
    - ▶ Deepen the curve - 6x
  - Well Roll Downs
    - ▶ Hands behind the head - 10x
    - ▶ Oblique variations
    - ▶ Arm circle low - 4 sets each side
  - The Hundred - 1 set
  - The Reach - 6x
  - Leg Series on the Arc
    - ▶ Scissors - 10x
    - ▶ Circles - 6x
    - ▶ Bicycle - 6x
  - Single Leg Stretch - 8 sets
  - Double Leg Stretch - 6x
  - Spine Stretch- 6x
  - Spine Stretch Side - 6x
  - Saw - 6x
- Swan - on top of arc - 6x
  - Swimming - on top of arc - 30 sets
  - Single Straight Leg Stretch - 8 sets
  - Criss Cross - 8 sets
  - Teaser Forward
    - ▶ Bookends - 6x
    - ▶ Teaser 1 - 5x
    - ▶ Teaser Oblique - Choose 2 variations - 4 sets each
  - Side Leg Series
    - ▶ Side Leg Lifts - 8 sets
    - ▶ Circles - 8 circles each direction
    - ▶ Leg Kicks - 8 sets
  - Rolling like a ball - 10x
  - Push Up - on bottom of arc (choose position)
    - ▶ Plank - 30 seconds
    - ▶ Push ups - 4x - 10x
  - Leg Pull Up - on bottom of arc (choose position)
  - Roll up to standing

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# THE PILATES ARC® ON THE REFORMER

The Pilates Arc® was designed to fit on all Balanced Body Reformers in order to create new exercise possibilities for teachers, therapists, students, clients and patients. The Pilates Arc or Step Barrel is used to increase the strength and mobility of the core and spine on the mat. When added to the Reformer, it provides the perfect platform to develop coordination, strength and balance.

- ▶ The Arc allows you to add torso flexion and extension elements into standard exercises such as Footwork.
- ▶ Acts as a teaching tool for beginners in exercises such as Stomach Massage.
- ▶ Provides support for pregnant clients.
- ▶ Adds new challenges to abdominal exercises such as the Hundred.
- ▶ And many more uses we haven't thought of yet!

## PLACING THE ARC ON THE REFORMER

Placing the The Pilates Arc on the Reformer is easy. Just lower the headrest and place either the front arch (the arch under the high slope end) or the middle arch over the shoulder rests so the Arc sits flat on the carriage. You can use the Arc with or without the step depending on which exercise you are performing.

## THE COMPLETE ARC ON THE REFORMER

You can place the complete Pilates Arc on the Reformer in any of the following configurations:

- ▶ Step to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rest
- ▶ Step to footbar, front arch over shoulder rest
- ▶ Step to shoulder rests

## THE ARC ONLY ON THE REFORMER

You can place the Arc without the step on the Reformer in any of the following positions.

- ▶ High slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rest
- ▶ High slope to footbar, front arch over shoulder rest
- ▶ Low slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rest

In order to accommodate the Arc, you may have to adjust the distance between the footbar and the carriage by moving the Allegro® or infinity footbar® or moving the springbar away from the footbar on the Revo® or One Step Reformer. Additional settings are listed under each exercise.



1 Whole Arc, step to foot bar, middle arch



2 Whole Arc, step to foot bar, front arch



3 Whole Arc, step to straps



4 Arc only, high slope to footbar, middle arch



5 Arc only, high slope to footbar, front arch



6 Arc only, low slope to footbar, middle arch

## CREATING NEW EXERCISES

All of the exercises in this manual were created by highly experienced Balanced Body Master Instructors. They are only a starting point so be creative and let us know what you come up with! If you want to share new exercises with other instructors please contact [nora.stjohn@pilates.com](mailto:nora.stjohn@pilates.com). Enjoy your Arc!

# FOOTWORK ON THE ARC

BEGINNING TO INTERMEDIATE | 10 REPS

**Springs:** 2RB to 3R **Footbar:** High or Low

**Arc only:** Low slope to footbar, middle arch

This is a simple way to modify the Footwork for a client who is more than 5 months pregnant or who can't lie supine due to eye problems, vertigo or other issues. With the torso variations it becomes a wonderfully complete warm up for the whole body.

## Footwork on the Arc

### STARTING POSITION

**Hands supporting the head:** Lie supine on the carriage with the upper body supported on the Arc and the head supported by the hands with the elbows wide. Place the feet on the footbar in one of the foot and leg positions below.

**Arms reaching forward:** Lie supine on the carriage with the upper body supported on the Arc and reach the arms forward.

**Head supported by the step:** Lie supine on the carriage with the upper body supported on the Arc and the head supported by the step. Use a sticky pad as the step will fall if you lift your head. You can also use pillows or towels to support the head.

**High slope to footbar:** For more intense back extension, place the Arc on the Reformer with the high slope towards the footbar and the shoulder rest in the front arch.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Straighten the legs, maintaining the position of the back on the Arc.

**Inhale** – Bend the knees as the carriage returns.

### FOOTWORK VARIATIONS

(see Reformer 1 Manual for more details)

#### Double Legs

- ▶ Heels ▶ Tendon stretch (Lift/Lower)
- ▶ Toes ▶ Wide/2nd position
- ▶ Prehensile ▶ Running in place
- ▶ V Feet

#### Single Leg

- ▶ Heels
- ▶ Toes
- ▶ Legs parallel
- ▶ Legs turned out



1. Footwork - Starting Position - Hands supporting the head



1. Footwork - Starting Position - Arms reaching forward



1 Footwork - Starting Position - Step supporting the head



2. Footwork - Press the carriage back

## Footwork with Torso Extension and Flexion

### STARTING POSITION

Lie supine on the carriage with the upper body supported on the Arc, the head lifted off the Arc with the torso in one line and the arms reaching forward. Place the feet on the footbar in one of the foot and leg positions listed above.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Straighten the legs and extend the back over the Arc as the arms circle up overhead. Depending on your flexibility and your height, you may or may not touch the Arc with your head.

**Exhale** – Bend the knees and roll the upper body up off the Arc into the Stomach Massage sitting position as the arms circle out and around to the starting position.

Reverse the direction of the arms on each repetition.



1. Footwork with torso extension and flexion - Starting Position - Arms reaching forward



2. Extend the back over the Arc as the legs straighten.



3. Roll all the way forward into Stomach Massage position to start again

### VARIATIONS

#### Single leg

Starting with one foot on the footbar, extend the free leg as you push the carriage back. Add back extension or rotation as you like.



1. Footwork Single Leg - Starting Position



2. Extend the free leg as you push the carriage back

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## Torso Rotation

Straighten the legs, rotate the torso to the left and reach the left arm out to the side as you roll back over the Arc. Bend the knees and return to the starting position. Alternate sides and do 3 to 4 reps to each side.



1. Footwork with Torso Rotation - Starting Position - Arms reaching forward



2. Rotate the torso and reach the arm out on a long diagonal as you extend the legs

## Around the World

Straighten the legs, rotate the torso to the left and reach the left arm out to the side as you roll back over the Arc. Continue to circle the arms overhead as you move through the center. Rotate the torso to the right and circle the arms back around to the front as you return to the starting position. Alternate directions and do 2 to 3 reps to each side.

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1. Footwork with Around the World - Starting Position - Arms reaching forward



2. Rotate the torso and reach the arms overhead as you press the carriage back



3 Center the torso with the upper back in extension



4. Rotate to the other side before bending the knees and returning to the starting position

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Engage the abdominals before you press back.
  - Draw the navel toward the spine.
  - Draw the hip bones together.
- ▶ Keep the hips, knees, ankles and feet in line.
  - Ideally, the ASIS, center of the knee cap, middle of the ankle and 2nd toe are on one line.
- ▶ Maintain the support of the back throughout the exercise.
  - In spinal flexion, focus on the abdominals.
  - In spinal extension, focus on lengthening and decompressing the spine.
  - There should be no spinal discomfort during this exercise.
- ▶ Maintain the support of the neck throughout the exercise.
  - Move smoothly from flexion into extension maintaining control of the head.
  - If the neck needs support, use the hands behind the head or support it with towels or the step.
- ▶ Make the movement smooth and continuous. Don't bump at the bottom or the top.
  - Imagine a waterwheel continuously rotating.

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## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the leg muscles including the internal and external rotators, quadriceps, hamstrings, abductors, adductors, calf muscles and ankle stabilizers
- ▶ Develop support for neutral spine
- ▶ Teach lumbopelvic stability
- ▶ Correct hip, leg and ankle alignment
- ▶ Increase circulation

## PRECAUTIONS

**For knee, hip and ankle injuries and after knee or hip surgery:** Decrease knee and hip flexion by limiting carriage return with footbar adjustments or stopper blocks. Avoid if symptoms increase.

**For sensitive feet:** Pad the footbar or work with shoes on.

**For low back, hip and sacroiliac joint injuries:** Support the low back with a towel, wedge or roll. Avoid if symptoms increase.

**For neck and shoulder injuries:** Support the head with the hands, the step or other supports and avoid the extension variations.

# STOMACH MASSAGE WITH THE ARC

BEGINNING | 6 REPS

**Springs:** 2RB to 3R    **Footbar:** Low

**Arc only:** High slope to footbar, middle arch

This is a much easier version of Stomach Massage for clients who are not very strong, tend to sink into their lower backs or who are very tight in their hamstrings. It is also a good footwork alternative for pregnant women after 5 months until their abdomen gets too large for the hip flexion to be comfortable.

## STARTING POSITION

Sit on the Reformer with your sacrum against the high slope edge of the arc. Place your feet on the footbar in the V-feet position and place your torso and hands in one of the positions listed below.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Engage the abdominals and straighten the legs to press the carriage back.

**Inhale** – Lower the heels under the bar, rise up on to the balls of the feet and return to the starting position.

## STOMACH MASSAGE VARIATIONS

(see Reformer 2 Manual for more details)

- ▶ Round Back
- ▶ Reach
- ▶ Twist
- ▶ Single Leg (no photo)

## ADDITIONAL VARIATIONS

### Monkey

Place the feet in parallel on the footbar with the knees bent and place the hands on the footbar. Straighten the legs and press the carriage back to stretch the lower back and the hamstrings.

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1. Stomach Massage Round Back - Starting Position - Hands on edge of carriage



2. Straighten the legs and press the carriage back



3. Lower the heels under the footbar



4. Rise up onto the balls of the feet before bending the knees and returning to the starting position



1. Stomach Massage Reach and Twist - Starting Position - Hands reaching forward



2. Stomach Massage Twist - Rotate and reach one arm out



1. Monkey - Starting Position - Legs parallel, hands on footbar



2. Straighten the legs to stretch the hamstrings and the lower back

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Stay seated on the ischial tuberosities (sit bones).
  - Imagine your sit bones are like a mountain, stay on the very top. Don't roll off either side.
- ▶ Keep lifting up and out of the hips.
  - Imagine a partner is holding your hips and lifting them off the legs as the legs straighten and bend.
- ▶ Maintain a slight amount of lumbar flexion.
  - Instructor use fingers on the lumbar spinous processes to cue a slight curve.
- ▶ Keep the head in line with the spine.
  - Cue the eye focus to adjust the alignment of the head.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals and the torso
- ▶ Strengthen the legs including the quadriceps, hamstrings, adductors and calves
- ▶ Increase flexibility of the lumbar spine, hamstrings and calves
- ▶ Improve leg alignment
- ▶ Teach scapular stabilization

## PRECAUTIONS

**Low back and sacroiliac joint issues:** Avoid if lumbar flexion increases symptoms.

**Knee issues:** Sit farther away from the footbar to decrease knee flexion or avoid if symptoms increase.

**Tight hamstrings, weak torsos, pregnancy:** Support the back by placing the box in short box position on its side behind you and leaning back into it.

**Avoid with osteoporosis.**

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# SIDE LYING LEG WORK ON THE ARC

BEGINNING | REPS 10 EACH

**Springs:** 2RB to 3RB **Footbar:** Low

**Arc only:** Low slope to footbar, middle arch or

**Arc and step:** Step toward the footbar, middle arch

The Side Lying Leg series helps develop medial and lateral hip and leg strength to improve the stability of the hips and pelvis in standing, walking and running. This is a very useful exercises for balancing the forces around the knee, hip and ankle.

## STARTING POSITION

Lie on your side on the Reformer with the bottom leg bent and the torso supported by the Arc. Support the head with the hand. Place the top leg on the footbar in parallel with the toes level with the end of the footbar padding to create a right angle at the hip joint.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Press the footbar away keeping the leg parallel to the floor.

**Inhale** – Bend the knee and return to the starting position.

## VARIATIONS

### Medial foot

Place the medial side of the foot on the bar and press back to engage the medial side of the leg.

### Lateral foot

Place the lateral side of the foot on the bar and press back to engage the lateral side of the leg.

### Hip extension

Place the foot farther back on the footbar to focus on hip extension and to increase the work on the quadriceps. The heel will be elevated in this position.

### External hip rotation

Place the heel on the footbar with the leg in external rotation. Keep the hip, knee and ankle aligned as you press the carriage back.

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1. Side Lying Legs Parallel - Starting Position



2. Straighten the leg and press the carriage back



1. Side Lying Legs Turned Out - Starting Position



2. Straighten the leg and press the carriage back



1. Side Lying Legs Hip Extension - Starting Position



2. Straighten the leg and press the carriage back

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## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the hip, knee, ankle and foot in good alignment.
  - Draw a line from the inside of the ASIS through the center of the patella and the middle of the ankle.
- ▶ Keep the top leg parallel to the carriage when working with a parallel leg.
  - Imagine the leg is supported by a table as you bend and straighten the knee.
  - Keep the knee cap pointing straight ahead.
- ▶ Keep the foot in a neutral position to the ankle in all the exercises.
  - Be careful of rolling in toward the arch or out to the side of the ankle.
  - Imagine you are wearing a basketball shoe and don't roll the ankle in either direction.
- ▶ Maintain good alignment through the torso.
  - Keep the head, torso and hips on one line. It is very easy to round the back.
  - Look straight ahead.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the hips and legs particularly the quadriceps, hamstrings, abductors and adductors of the hip.
- ▶ Strengthen the ankles
- ▶ Teach standing alignment

## PRECAUTIONS

**For knee, hip and ankle injuries and after knee or hip surgery:** Decrease knee and hip flexion by limiting carriage return with footbar adjustments or stopper blocks. Avoid if symptoms increase.

**For sensitive feet:** Pad the footbar or work with shoes on.

**For low back, hip and sacroiliac joint injuries:** Keep the back straight and in good alignment throughout the exercise

**For neck and shoulder injuries:** Support the head as needed.

# ABDOMINAL SERIES ON THE ARC

INTERMEDIATE | REPS VARY

**Springs:** B to RY **Footbar:** No bar **Straps:** Regular or Short

**Arc and step:** Step toward the footbar, middle arch

The Abdominal Series on the Arc takes some of the mat and Reformer abdominals and places them on the Arc for increased abdominal and pelvic stability work.

## The Hundred

### STARTING POSITION

Lie supine on the Arc facing the footbar with the tailbone close to the top of the step. Place the feet in a chair position to begin. Move the hips up or down the step to create more challenge for the abdominals or more support for the lower back. Hold the straps in the hands with the elbows bent or straight depending on the variation.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Engage the abdominals, draw the ribs toward the hips to lift the head and lower the arms until they are just slightly above the carriage and parallel to the torso.

Pump the arms in a small arc as you breathe in for 5 pulses and out for 5 pulses. The breathing can be percussive, taking a small sniff with each pulse, or continuous, breathing smoothly in for 5 pulses and smoothly out for 5 pulses.

Choose your leg position based on your ability to maintain the stability of the back.

### MODIFICATIONS

#### Level 1

The knees stay bent at 90 degrees. Low back stays on the mat or in a supported neutral position.

#### Level 2

The legs straighten to the ceiling. The leg position can be parallel or turned out. Bend knees with tight hamstrings.

#### Level 3

The legs lower as far as possible while the back remains stable. The leg position can be parallel or turned out.



1. The Hundred – Starting Position



2. Straighten the legs, lower the arms and pulse the hands



## Backstroke

Hold the straps in the hands with the elbows bent.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Reach the arms and the legs toward the ceiling.

**Exhale** – Open the legs and the arms and circle them around toward the ground until you are in the Hundred position.

**Exhale** – Bend the knees into the chest.

**Inhale** – Lower the head and return the arms to the starting position.



1. Backstroke - Starting Position



2. Reach the arms and the legs up toward the ceiling



3. Circle the arms and legs out and around to come into the Hundred position

## Single Leg Stretch

Hold the straps in the hands with the elbows straight.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Engage the abdominals, lift the head and lower the arms until they are parallel to the torso as in the Hundred. Reach the right leg out parallel to the floor as you reach the arms toward the feet and lift the torso slightly off the Arc

**Inhale** – Bend the knee into chair position and return the torso to the Arc without lowering the head.

**Exhale** – Reach the left leg out parallel to the floor as you reach the arms toward the feet and lift the torso slightly off the Arc.

**Inhale** – Bend the knee back into the chair position and return the torso to the Arc.

Repeat 6 to 10 times on each side

### EXERCISE VARIATIONS

#### Single Straight Leg Stretch

Begin with the legs straight and pointing toward the ceiling and alternately lower one leg toward the floor at a time while reaching the torso off the Arc.



1. Single Leg Stretch - Reach the torso towards the feet as the leg bends in



1. Single Straight Leg Stretch - Reach the torso towards the feet as the leg lifts



# ARM WORK ON THE ARC FACING STRAPS

BEGINNING TO INTERMEDIATE | 4 -10 REPS

**Springs:** B to RY **Footbar:** No bar

**Straps:** Short or Regular

**Arc and step:** Step toward the shoulder rests.

Arm Work on the Arc facing the straps adds abdominal work to the arm exercises and makes this a much more challenging exercise. All of the arm work in this direction helps to develop elbow flexion, posterior shoulder and upper back strength and is great for improving posture especially for office workers.

## STARTING POSITION

Sit in the well or lie supine on the Arc facing the straps with the tailbone close to the top of the step and the straps in the hands.

## EXERCISE POSITION VARIATIONS

- ▶ Sit in the well with the feet on the head rest and the lower back supported by the Arc.
- ▶ Lie on the Arc with the tailbone close to the top of the step and hold the legs in chair position with the hips and knees flexed at 90 degrees.
- ▶ Lie on the Arc with the tailbone close to the top of the step and hold the legs in Teaser position with the legs straight.

## MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Engage the abdominals and pull the straps back.

**Inhale** – Return the arms to the starting position with control.

## ARM WORK VARIATIONS

(see Reformer 1 Manual for more details)

- ▶ **Biceps**
- ▶ **Triceps/Posterior Deltoid**
- ▶ **Alternating Double Arm Twist (No photo)**
- ▶ Rows

### Overhead Press

Maintaining the position of the torso, reach the arms overhead and circle them around to the starting position.

### Overhead Press with Upper Back Extension

Maintaining the position of the torso, reach the arms overhead and extend the upper back then circle them around to the starting position to begin again.



1. Starting Position - Feet on headrest



1. Starting Position - Legs in chair position



1. Starting Position - Legs in Teaser position



1. Biceps – Pull the straps in by bending the elbows



1. Triceps/Posterior Deltoid – Press the straps back



1. Rows – Draw the elbows back and the shoulder blades together



2. Press the straps overhead



3. Extend the upper back as the arms press up to increase the challenge



1. Overhead Press – Bend the elbows as if you are doing a biceps curl

## CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Engage the abdominals before moving the arms.
  - Exhale and pull the abdominals in then move arms.
- ▶ Keep the chest open, the shoulders away from the ears and the eyes looking straight ahead.
- ▶ Keep the wrists straight.
  - Curl the wrists forward to start.

## PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen arm and shoulder muscles including rotator cuff, brachialis, biceps, triceps, pectoralis major, latissimus dorsi and deltoid
- ▶ Strengthen scapular stabilizers including serratus anterior, trapezius and rhomboids
- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals
- ▶ Increase torso stabilization

## PRECAUTIONS

**For shoulder, arm and wrist injuries:** Check to see whether handles or straps are more comfortable to hold. Keep wrists straight. Keep arms below 90 degrees of flexion or abduction.

**For low back injuries:** Choose the most comfortable position for the back or avoid.





# SHORT BOX EXERCISES ON THE ARC

BEGINNING TO ADVANCED | 10 REPS

**Springs:** All **Footbar:** No bar

**Arc Only:** Low slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rests or high slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rests

The Short Box exercises on the Arc provide additional back support for the extension variations and provides good feedback for spinal articulation.

## Short Box Abdominals

### STARTING POSITION

**Low slope to footbar:** Place a sticky pad on the Arc and sit up on the low slope facing the footbar with your feet under the footstrap. Depending on the shape of the curves in your spine, you will get a different kind of support as you roll back over the Arc. Feel free to experiment with your placement to get the support you need.

**High slope to footbar:** Place a sticky pad on the Arc and sit up on the high slope facing the footbar with your feet on the footbar. The high slope provides more support for tighter back in extension but it is harder not to slide down the slope.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Exhale** – Engage the abdominals, lightly engage the gluteals and roll down with a long curve maintaining a slight flexion of the lumbar spine.

**Inhale** – Take a small sip of air at the bottom of the roll down.

**Exhale** – Roll back up.

**Inhale** – Prepare to start again.

### VARIATIONS

(see Reformer 1 and 2 Manual for more details)

- ▶ Flat Back
- ▶ Twist (No photos)
- ▶ Around the World (No photos)
- ▶ Advanced Abdominals
- ▶ Fire Baton (No photos)
- ▶ Climb a Tree



1. Short Box Abdominals – Starting Position



2. Roll down keeping the low back slightly rounded



3. Extend the back over the Arc if you are doing an advanced variation

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### CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Engage the abdominals and lightly squeeze the buttocks to begin.
- ▶ Engage the abdominals and draw the sit bones together to roll back.
- ▶ Roll back only as far as you can maintain the position of the back.
  - Don't let the low back go into an unsupported extension position on the arc.
- ▶ Instructor cue: Place fingers on spinous processes of lumbar vertebrae and make sure they stay in place as client rolls or leans back. During the round back, the lumbar should be slightly flexed and with the flat back the lumbar should be neutral.
- ▶ Keep legs together and aligned.
  - Imagine holding a \$100 dollar bill over a street grate. Don't lose it.
  - Place a ball above knees or at ankles to keep inner thighs engaged.
- ▶ Keep the shoulders away from the ears.
  - Slide the shoulder blades into your back pockets.

### PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen abdominals
- ▶ Strengthen back extensor muscles (especially in flat back version)
- ▶ Stretch the low back (especially in the round back version)
- ▶ Teach balanced strength between abdominals and back extensors

### PRECAUTIONS

**Low back and sacroiliac joint issues:** Avoid if lumbar flexion increases symptoms. Bend the knees to facilitate flexion. Limit the range of motion in the Roll Down if extension increases symptoms.

**Neck injuries:** Limit the range of the Roll Down to keep the neck symptom free.

**Shoulder injuries:** Cross the arms across the chest rather than holding bar or limit range of motion in shoulders and use a light bar.

**Avoid with osteoporosis**



1. Climb a Tree – Starting Position



2. Roll down keeping the low back slightly rounded and the hands on the leg



3. Extend the back over the Arc if you are doing an advanced variation

# ELEPHANT ON THE ARC

BEGINNING | 10 REPS

**Springs:** B to RB **Footbar:** High or Low

**Arc Only:** Low slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rests or High slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rests

In the Elephant the Arc is used to increase the stretch and to deepen the flexion of the spine in the Round Back Elephant.

## Elephant

### STARTING POSITION

Place the Arc so the high slope is facing the footbar. Mount the Reformer by placing the hands on the footbar first then placing the heels in front of the Arc with the feet flat on the carriage.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Press the heels back to stretch the calves and hamstrings.

**Exhale** – Engage the abdominals to draw the carriage in while maintaining a round back.

### VARIATIONS

(see Reformer 1 Manual for more details)

- ▶ Round Back Elephant
- ▶ Walking
- ▶ Arabesque

### CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Maintain a long line from top of head to tail.
  - Instructor cue: Place a pole or roller along clients back making sure head, mid thoracic and sacrum all connect to the line.
  - Seeing the body in a mirror can help your client to find the right position.
- ▶ Keep the head in line with the spine.
  - Use the focus of the eyes to keep head in line.
- ▶ Maintain the position of the shoulders and upper body during the exercise.
  - Keep the elbows straight, slide the shoulders down the back and widen the shoulder blades.



1. Elephant Flat Back – Starting Position



2. Press the carriage back

### PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the torso including the abdominals, erector spinae, gluteus maximus, adductors and shoulder girdle
- ▶ Strengthen scapular stabilizers including serratus anterior, lower trapezius and pectoralis major
- ▶ Increase scapular stability

### PRECAUTIONS

**For shoulder, arm and wrist injuries:** Grip the footbar to take the pressure off the wrists or avoid if the arms won't tolerate being flexed above shoulder height or if symptoms increase. Substitute plank position on the elbows on the mat if it is tolerable.

# CONTROL FRONT ON THE ARC

ADVANCED • 3 REPS

**Springs:** B to RB **Footbar:** High or Low

**Arc Only:** Low slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rests or High slope to footbar, middle arch over shoulder rests

In this variation, the Arc provides a platform for the hands that is more comfortable than the shoulder rests.

### STARTING POSITION

The Arc can be placed in either direction for this exercise. Mount the Reformer by placing the hands on the Arc first, then pressing the carriage out as you place the feet on the footbar. Instructor assistance may be required for safety.

### MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

**Inhale** – Use the arms to press the carriage away from the bumpers while lifting one leg off the footbar. Pulse the leg 3 times.

**Exhale** – Return to the starting position.

Repeat 3 times on each side alternating legs.

### MODIFICATION

#### No Leg Lift

Move the carriage without taking the foot off the footbar.

### CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Maintain a long line from the top of the head to the tail.
  - As if your body is a plank of wood.
- ▶ Keep the head in line with the spine.
  - Direct the gaze to keep the head in line.
- ▶ Maintain the position of the shoulders and upper body during the exercise.
  - Press the hands into the Arc and keep the space wide between the shoulders.
  - Don't sink the chest.
- ▶ Maintain the alignment of the torso as the leg moves.
  - Don't sink or lift the hips. The leg moves all by itself.



1. Control Front – Starting Position



2. Press the carriage out and lift one leg

### PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the torso
- ▶ Strengthen scapular stabilizers and the chest including serratus anterior, lower trapezius and pectoralis major
- ▶ Strengthen the hamstrings and gluteus maximus
- ▶ Increase scapular stability

### PRECAUTIONS

**For shoulder, arm and wrist injuries:** Grip the shoulder rests or pad them to take the pressure off the wrists. Avoid if the arms won't tolerate being flexed above shoulder height or if symptoms increase.



