

FIRST-TIME PILATES

Everything you need to know before beginning a Pilates Mat Program at BODY reFORM

What are Pilates Mat Exercises?

There are approximately 40 mat exercises designed by Joseph Pilates that are performed lying on your back, side or front. Some of the exercises are done seated, on all fours or standing. The mat exercises target the deep abdominal, spinal and pelvic floor muscles in order to provide core strength. Though mat classes were traditionally done with just your body and a mat, at BODY reFORM we provide and incorporate props such as fitness circles, mini balls, stability balls, foam rollers and resistance bands.

What results can I expect from Pilates Mat exercises?

Regular practice of Pilates mat exercises several times a week can result in improved posture and increased abdominal tone. You may stand taller, become stronger, and your lower abdominal area may appear flatter. You may also experience increased comfort in the movements of your spine. Pilates mat exercises will develop strength, flexibility, coordination and balance, but does not provide a cardiovascular workout.

How can I tell if Pilates Mat exercises are right for me?

Despite the popularity, Pilates mat exercises are not for everyone. These exercises can be very demanding, as they can put strain on the muscles that support the neck and those that support the lower spine. Discuss your exercise program with your health-care professional and with your Pilates instructor. If you experience sharp pain during an exercise, don't try to keep up with the class, talk to the instructor about a modification. For some people, individual mat or Pilates exercise equipment sessions would be more appropriate than a class setting.

What will the class be like?

Classes at BODY reFORM are 60 minutes. As previously mentioned, mats and small equipment will be provided for your use during the class. Usually the class will begin with you lying on your back and progress to all fours, then to your front, buttocks or side. All classes begin with a series of warm-up exercises then progress to the Pilates exercise oftentimes introducing a prep movement first to prepare your body for the actual exercise.

Are there different levels of classes for beginners and for those with more experience?

Classes at BODY reFORM are divided into levels. All students new to Pilates, or who need a refresher, begin with an INTRO to MAT series. After completing this session, a student may wish to repeat the Intro or progress to Level 1. Class sizes are limited to 8 for Intro classes and 10-12 for the other levels. BODY reFORM also offers specialized classes in Gentle Pilates, Pilates for the Athlete and Pilates during Pregnancy.

What is the cost of the class?

At BODY reFORM the class fee varies depending on the length of the quarter.

How do I choose an instructor?

Ask friends for a recommendation, but do not feel compelled to stay with an instructor who isn't right for you. Before a new quarter begins, ask to observe a class, and while at the studio, notice if you feel comfortable in our mat room. Do you like the instructor's voice? Does he/she speak clearly, making it easy for you to understand? Does the instructor provide individual corrections? Most instructors provide hands-on corrections, but if you prefer not to be touched, just let the instructor know. The most important point is that you listen to your body and not push yourself beyond your limits.

What should I wear?

Wear comfortable exercise clothes of lightweight cotton or another fabric that allows your skin to breathe. Pilates mat exercises are practiced in socks or bare feet. Skip the ponytail or bun on the back of your head because you will be uncomfortable as you lie on your back with your head on the mat. Avoid dangling jewelry for comfort and safety. Also, avoid wearing scented lotions, creams, perfumes, or sprays that may be offensive to others.

What should I bring to class?

Bring a small water bottle for sips of water during class. A water dispenser is available for your use. You may also bring a towel to place on our mats and another towel for underneath your head or neck. There are small towels available for your use.

Should I eat or drink before class?

Do not eat for an hour before class so that you can be comfortable while performing sustained abdominal contractions. Make sure that you are well nourished, so that you can maintain your concentration as well as your strength. Drink water freely up until an hour before class, but then have only a few sips until class begins. Using pelvic floor and abdominal muscles may make you feel that you need to urinate. If that happens, feel free to leave the room and upon your return resume the exercises.

Should I warm up prior to class?

Although it is not necessary to warm up, you may feel more flexible if you do a light cardio workout 12-15 minutes before class. An excellent warm up choice would be a walk through Old Town Silverdale.

What instructional terms are used in class?

Some instructors use images to convey the specifics of Pilates movements—"as you inhale, imagine that you are filling a balloon with air and as you exhale all the air is being released from the balloon." Verbal cues used are "pull your lower abdominal area toward your spine" or "scoop in and up just above your pubic bone",

"activate your pelvic floor, to aid in the contraction of the deep abdominals." We will also use the phrase "core control" to refer to the synergistic co-contraction of the pelvic floor, deep abdominal muscles and the muscles that support your spine. Feel free to ask for further explanation if cues are not clear to you.

How do I breathe in Pilates?

Breathe at a rate that is comfortable to you. Generally, inhale through the nose and into the side and back of the ribs to prepare for exertion. Exhale, through your mouth, just before and throughout exertion in order to enhance the abdominal contraction. Relax your shoulders away from your ears and keep the ribs and pelvis aligned.

What should I avoid in class?

Expect to experience strong muscular effort, but avoid sharp pain. Stop if you feel neck or back strain. You can always ask the instructor for a modification of an exercise making it safe and effective for you. If you are pregnant or have a medical condition such as osteoporosis, heart problems, herniated disks or glaucoma, seek the counsel of your healthcare professional and consider private instruction for a customized program.

How do I add Pilates mat exercises to my fitness regime?

In addition to your other fitness training, plan on one hour of Pilates mat work twice a week. Pilates will provide the benefits of improved alignment, core control and increased body awareness to your other fitness activities.

How do I practice at home?

Each week, you will learn new exercises. You will be given a sheet with the Primary Essential Exercises listed. Practice these exercises at home. Also, when you are enrolled in a class at BODY reFORM you are able to check out, with a deposit, STOTT Pilates DVDs and Videos. BODY reFORM has STOTT Pilates DVDs For Sale.