



# The Pilates Basic Mat Workout

To be used in conjunction with:

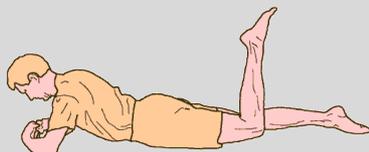
- Pilates upper body workout
- Stretches and mobilisations to complement Pilates mat

By Bruce Thomson

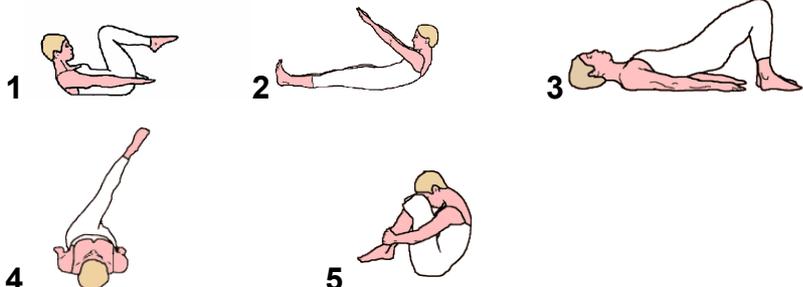
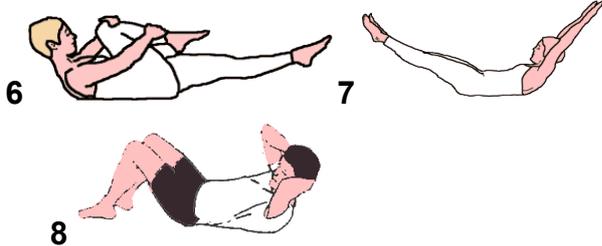
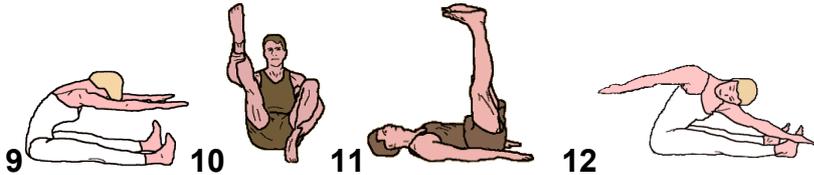
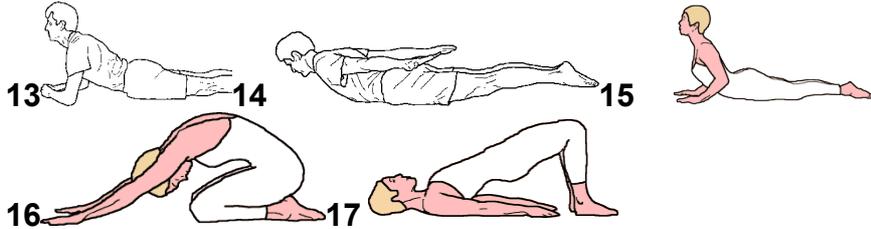
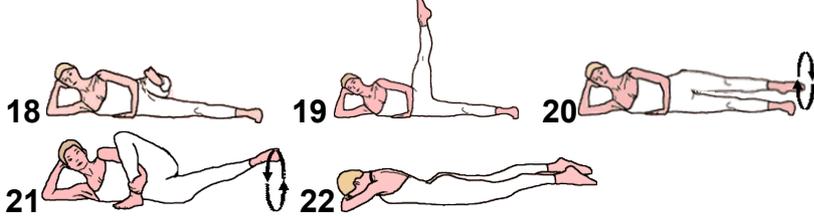
Bruce Thomson Pilates, Box 8037 Invercargill New Zealand

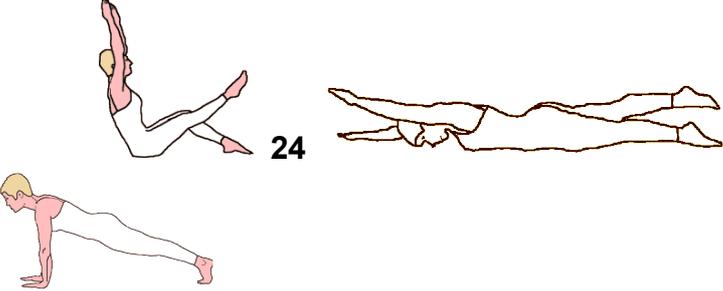
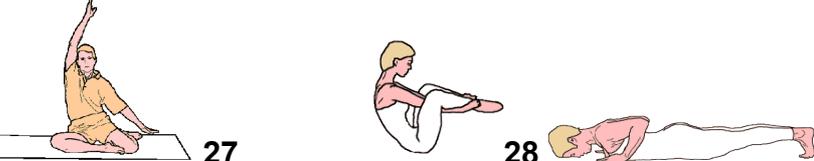
[www.pilatesrunner.com/brucethomson](http://www.pilatesrunner.com/brucethomson)

Disclaimer: (1) This program is not intended to replace the advice of a medical professional. (2) The writer has made every effort to assemble a set of safe and well trialled instructions, however as you will be aware, all exercise involves risk. The risk you take is your responsibility.



## Pictorial Table of Exercises

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<p><b>Side Kick Series:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Front &amp; Back (6-10)</li> <li>19. Up &amp; Down (6-10)</li> <li>20. Small Circles (5-8)</li> <li>21. Inner Thigh Lifts &amp; Circles (5-8)</li> <li>22. Beats on Belly (3 lots of 6)</li> </ol> <p>Page: 11</p>	

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# The Pilates Basic Mat Workout

(For more information, visit [www.easyvigour.net.nz/bruce](http://www.easyvigour.net.nz/bruce))

## 1. MAT-HUNDRED

REPS: 100 PUMPS OF ARMS/10 FULL BREATHS

**SET UP:** Lie on your back, knees together and bent, feet flat on the floor. Lengthen spine and neck.

**ACTION:** Chin to chest, knees to chest and arms point half way up the wall in front.  
Zip the lower belly, and breathe into the side of the ribs.  
Roll shoulder blades down the back and relax shoulders wide.  
Pump arms vigorously up and down 6 - 8 inches above abdominals, and breathe: Inhale 5  
Exhale 5

1



2



Easy



Advanced



**PRECISION:** Tips of shoulder blades stay on mat.  
Back of neck long, work to centerline  
Spine lengthened, breastbone heavy to the mat.

## 2. MAT - ROLL UP

REPS: 5

**SET UP:** Lie on your back with legs out straight in Pilates stance, (or flexed with hands under thighs.)  
Reach your arms above your head in line with shoulders, reach fingers long.

**ACTION:** (1) Head looks through arms (2) Inhale, scoop deeply, roll up to sitting. (3) Maintain C-curve, Exhale forward lift abdominals deeply in and up, roll shoulder blades down back, relax shoulders wide.  
(4) Inhale and keep your spine curl as you bring your lower back to the mat; exhale, roll down through spine, and reach your arms over and back.

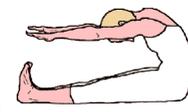
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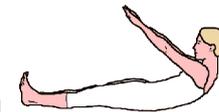
2



3



4



**PRECISION:**

Keep C curve in back while reaching forward. Peel upper, middle then lower back off mat. Legs stay long and tight together. Keep ribs on mat when arms reach behind.

5



Easy



### 3. MAT – PELVIC CURL W. SKATEBOARD ACTION

REPS: 3-5

**SET UP:** Lie supine press your palms into the mat. Feet parallel and lined up with the hips a foot length from your (12 inches).

**ACTION:**

Zip the lower abdomen.

**To curl up:**

Inhale, then exhale to lift the tail bone between the legs and then curl the pelvis, then the spine off the mat.

**Skateboard action:**

Imagine the pelvis is a skateboard. Glide it to the left, and then to the right. (Keep the knees still and press your palms into the mat).

**To curl down:**

Inhale, then curl back down.

**PRECISION:**

Apply an almost imperceptible chin tuck, and keep the back of your neck long.

**1  
First Curl up:**



**Start the skateboard here:**



**Then curl down:**



Skate the pelvis from side to side.

Then Curl Down:  
The action is the reverse of the curl up pictured to the left.

### 4. MAT- ONE LEG CIRCLE

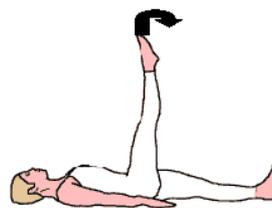
REPS: 5 EACH DIRECTION

**SET UP:** Lie on your back, one leg straight up to the ceiling, the other leg on the mat, both legs in the centreline. Anchor arms, shoulder blades, pelvis and head into mat.

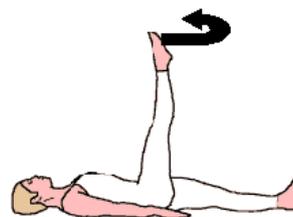
**ACTION:** Draw a circle with your toe: (A) Cross a long leg over your body, circle down, around and up. Shoulder blades roll down, and keep your ribs to the mat. (B) Reverse direction: Down; cross over and up.

**PRECISION:** Accent the cross over and up in each direction. Keep extended leg in centreline Scoop deeper to lift leg up. Anchor 2 hips, 2 palms, 2 shoulders and head. Inhale for one circle, exhale for the next.

1



2



Easy



## 5. HAMSTRING STRETCH

REPS: 5 EACH LEG

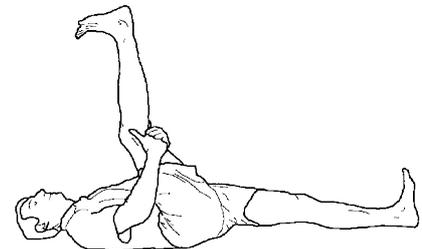
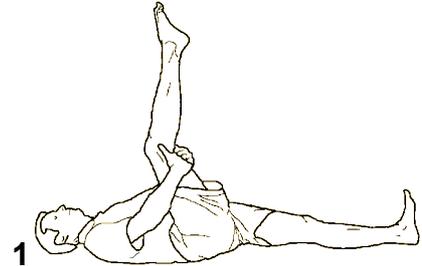
**SET UP:** Lie on your back, one leg straight up to the ceiling, the other leg on the mat. Grasp just below the knee on the vertical leg.

### ACTION:

1. Pull the knee toward the shoulder and hold in position.
2. Inhale and flex the toes.
3. Exhale, straighten the knee point the toes downward toward the kneecaps.
4. (Repeat 5\* each leg).

### PRECISION:

1. Work within your limits.
2. (Except for a slight zip of the lower belly), relax and let the muscles lengthen.



2

## 6 MAT- ROLLING LIKE A BALL

REPS: 6 - 8

**SET UP:** Wrap hands across and low on ankles, one hand holds the opposite wrist in a bracelet hold. Hug heels close to bottom. Curl forward; bring head to knees. Lift feet lightly off mat in Pilates point, heels together and toes slightly apart.

1



2



3



**ACTION:** Pull abdominals in and keep chin to chest throughout. Inhale to roll back. Exhale to roll up, ribs in; eyes down and balance.

**PRECISION:** Nose to sternum, Chin to chest at all times. Chest relaxed, back round, stay tight in a ball.

Heels together and toes slightly apart, shoulders relaxed wide, shoulder blades rolled down.

### Easier Version 1... 2... 3



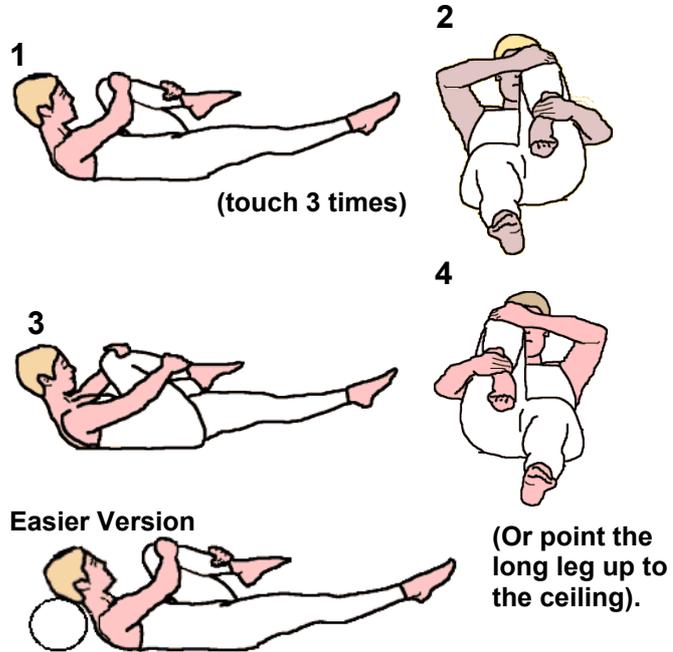
## 7. MAT: SINGLE LEG STRETCH

REPS: 4 – 6 EACH LEG

**SET UP:** Lie on your back. Chin to chest and lengthen your spine and neck; one leg bent into chest. Knee, hip and ankle in line. Outside hand on the ankle and other hand on the knee, elbows wide. Extend the other leg out as low as you can while still imprinting your spine to the mat. Shoulder blade tips lightly touch the mat; toe in line with nose.

**ACTION:** Pull your leg firmly into your body (and then further). Draw belly in and up. Lower the long leg to the ground with toes to kneecap, and touch the calf to the ground three times. Inhale to switch, and exhale to lower and touch.

**PRECISION:** Tips of shoulder blades on mat. Keep both legs in centreline. Both sides of body long. Legs pull in and out with resistance. Keep spine imprinted on the mat.



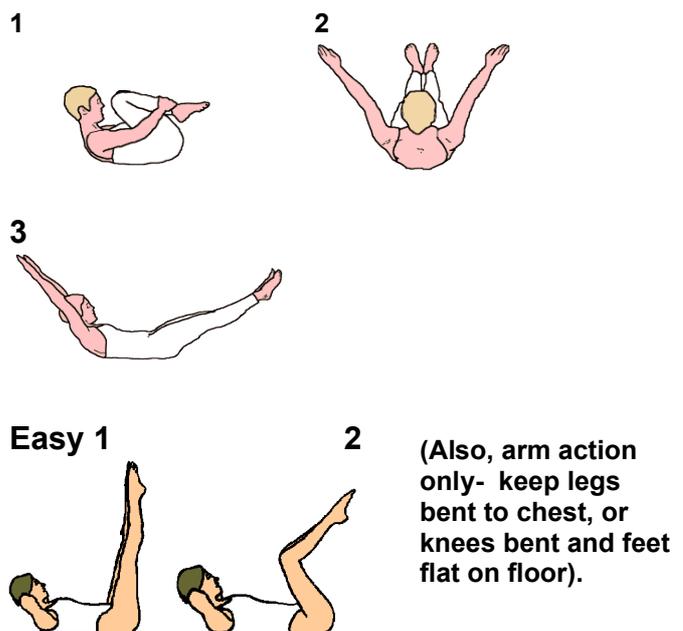
## 8. MAT: DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

REPS 6 - 10

**SET UP:** Chin to chest and lengthen your spine and neck. Eyes on your belly button; maintain shoulder tips lightly touching the mat and both knees slightly apart and into your chest. Hold your shins and hug them firmly to your seat. Elbows wide, and feet softly pointed.

**ACTION:**  
Inhale as you reach your arms and legs out long from your centre; 45 degrees from the mat. Pause, Inhale; reach long. Sweep arms to the side and around to hug your ankles in. Exhale and hug tight.

**PRECISION:**  
Spine stays long on mat, work your centre line. Roll your shoulder blades down your back and anchor them to your ribs. Exhale completely, squeeze the toxins out of your lungs!!!!



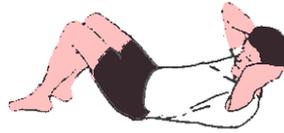
## 9. MAT - CRISS CROSS

REPS: 6-10

**SET UP:** Stack your hands under your head, elbows out wide. Knees bent and feet on the floor. Curl up so that just the tips of the shoulder blades touch the mat and your eyes are on the belly.

### ACTION:

Criss to the left.  
Cross to the right.  
Inhale through the center, exhale to the left,  
inhale through the center, exhale to the right.



### PRECISION:

Keep the length in the sides and the front of the torso.  
Arms and shoulders remain wide.  
Shoulder blades remain off the mat.

## 10. MAT- SPINE STRETCH FORWARD

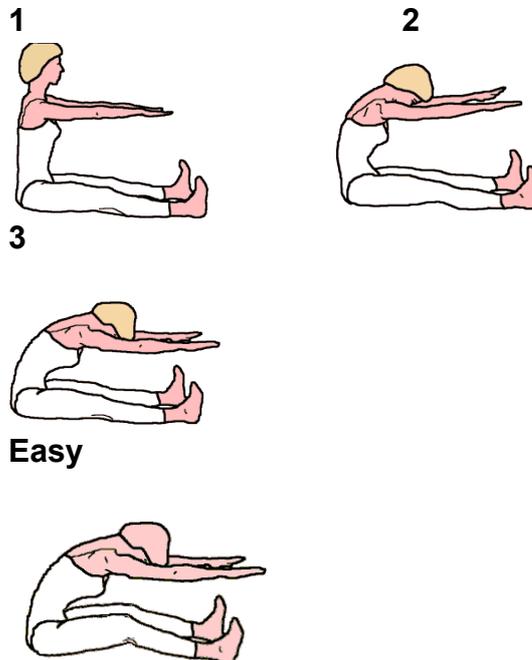
REPS: 5

**SET UP:** Sit tall with legs slightly wider than hip width. Knees facing ceiling and toes to knee caps. Arms straight out in front of shoulders, palms down. Lift up out of your hips, scoop deep. Roll your shoulder blades down your back, and relax your shoulders wide.

**ACTION:** Sit tall, chin to chest and lift abs deeply in and up. Exhale, and peel off the wall vertebra by vertebra. Empty your lungs and reach, reach, reach (three times). Inhale to roll up: your lower, middle then upper back, pressing abs to spine. Sit tall!

### PRECISION:

Keep your shoulders wide and roll your shoulder blades down.  
Deepen into sternum to initiate curl of spine  
Keep arms at shoulder height.  
Form a horse shoe: Keep your ribs lifted away from your hips.



## 11. THE SAW

REPS - 3 TO 5 EACH WAY

**SET UP:** Open your legs a little wider than your shoulders and reach your arms out to the sides in line with your shoulders. Sit tall; lift up out of your hips; perch with the toes to kneecaps.

### ACTION:

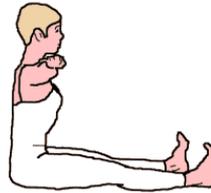
Twist your spine, lower the back arm and look at it as you reach your pinky finger past the little toe; reach and exhale; reach further and exhale; reach further again and exhale. Inhale to roll up (initiate from the navel) and return to the center position.

Repeat on the opposite side.

### PRECISION:

Anchor your sit bones, twist with your belly.  
Opposite hip and legs stay anchored  
Stay in twist to sit up.  
"Look with the eyes, listen with the ear".

1



2



3



## 11. Ski Ramp

REPS: 2-3

**SET UP:** Lie on your stomach; prop your self on your elbows; abs scooped. Your hands are under your eyes.

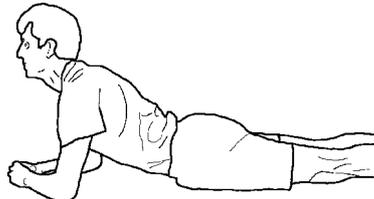
### ACTION:

Rise up through your shoulder blades and pull your thumb off.  
Breathe into the sides of your ribs and shine your breastbone forward

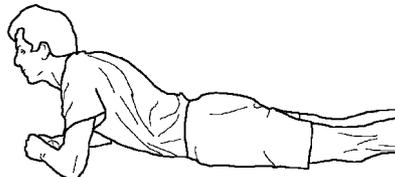
### PRECISION:

Keep the length in the back of your neck.  
Roll the shoulder blades down and relax your shoulders wide.

Good



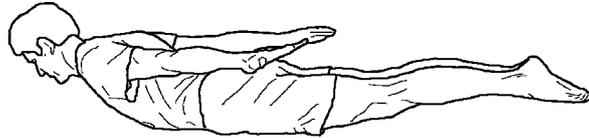
Poor



## 12. Flight

REPS: 2-3

**SET UP:** Lie on your stomach; hands by your sides, palms up. Scoop “house for a mouse”. For lower back support, clench your butt and wrap around the back of the inner thighs.

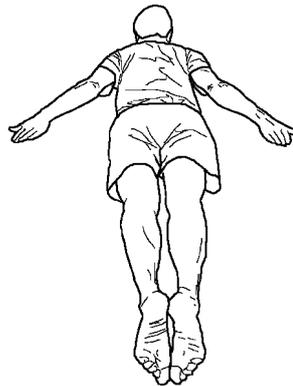


### **ACTION:**

Raise your arms, your shoulders, your head, and finally your legs.  
Breathe into the sides of the ribs and bring the breastbone high.

### **PRECISION:**

Roll the shoulder blades down the back. Reach for the back wall with your toes and fingers.  
Keep the length in the back of the neck



## 13. SWAN PREP – NECK ROLL

REPS: 2-3

**SET UP:** Lie on your stomach; hands by the armpits, elbows up like duck wings; abs deeply scooped – “house for a mouse”. For lower back support, clench your butt and wrap around the back of the inner thighs. Gently tuck the chin to maintain

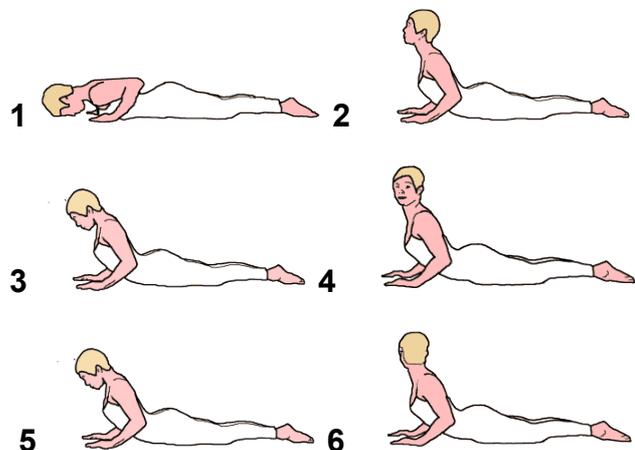
### **ACTION:**

Inhale and push up to a ship’s figure head, pull your breast bone and chin forward to a low horizon.

Scoop; keep your elbows close to your ribs.  
Breathe naturally: Chin to chest; look to one side; chin to chest and look to the other side; Look down and lower.

### **PRECISION:**

Roll your shoulder blades down your back.  
Apply a one mm chin tuck and keep some length in the back of the neck.



## 14. MAT - REST POSITION

REPS: 3 BREATHS

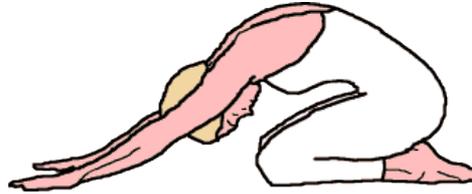
**SET UP:** Sit on your heels with knees together or just slightly apart; lengthen your tailbone under your heels. Place your hands in front and slide them forward.

### ACTION:

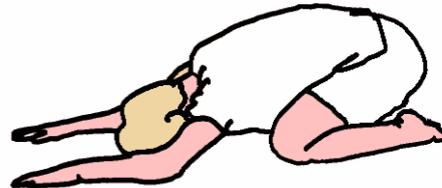
Inhale into the side of the ribs. Exhale and scoop the belly off your thighs...  
Now rest heavy on your thighs, and breathe up and down your spine.

### PRECISION:

Soft and heavy shoulders; armpits point down.



### Alternative:-



Knee problems or groin pinch: just lower to the point of discomfort and hold.

## 15. MAT - SHOULDER BRIDGE PREP

REPS: 3-5

**SET UP:** Lie on your back with the knees bent and heels under knees. Press your palms into the mat.

### ACTION:

Scoop the abs, clench the butt, and inhale to boost your torso and pelvis up in one piece. Pause and lengthen the side body.  
Exhale to roll chest away from chin then roll down bone by bone.

### PRECISION:

Zip up the lower belly.  
Lengthen the side body and apply a one mm chin tuck.  
Weight over the foot arches, boost up on your gluteals rather than your hamstrings.

1



2



3



## 16. MAT - SIDE KICK SERIES - FRONT AND BACK

REPS 6 -10

**SET UP:** Lie on your side along the back of the mat. Prop your head on your hand, and bring long legs forward to an angle of 40 degrees. Anchor your top hand six inches in front of your heart, relax and keep the elbow high. Stack shoulder over shoulder & hip over hip. Lower foot to the floor and "toes to kneecap". Scoop the abdomen and keep the pelvis still.

### ACTION:

Breathe naturally and fully.  
Lift top leg to hip height; kick forward long and strong, two pulses - kick, kick.  
Reach leg straight and long behind, two pulses - kick, kick slow enough to feel the stretch).

### PRECISION:

Lengthen the upper side of the body, and keep shoulder over shoulder, hip over hip.  
Work the hip "in the joint", the leg is a match stick gliding above the floor.  
Energize the top hip forward of the lower hip.  
The hips remain motionless.

1



2



3



## 17. MAT - SIDE KICK SERIES - UP AND DOWN

REPS 6 -10

**SET UP:** Maintain your side position and reach your top leg out of the hip more.

### ACTION:

Breathe naturally. Turn your top leg outward. (The knee cap looks up to the ceiling). Lift strong and straight up to the side.  
Lower slowly through treacle, turn leg out even more and reach L-O-N-G.

### PRECISION:

Relax your shoulders wide; breathe into the side of the ribs.  
Zip up the lower belly.  
Hold on to your "Box", shoulder over shoulder; hip over hip; heel over heel.  
Put energy into taking the leg backward and the hip forward.

1



2



3



## 18. MAT - SIDE KICK SERIES - CIRCLES

REPS: 5 – 8 EACH WAY

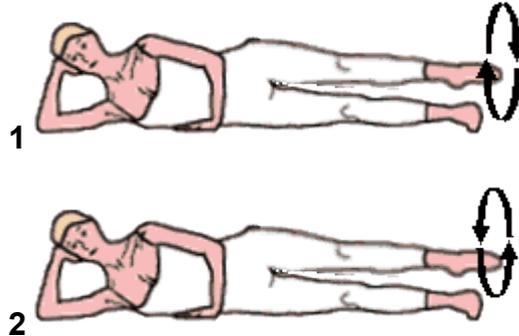
**SET UP:** Maintain the side position and reach the leg longer. Scoop the abdominals and maintain the legs Parallel. Deepen your abs.

### ACTION:

Turn the leg out and point with the ball of the big toe.  
Circle leg equally around front and back.  
Lengthen and reverse, move only the leg.

### PRECISION:

Pull the leg long out of the hip.



## 19. MAT - SIDE KICK SERIES - INNER THIGH LIFT AND CIRCLES

REPS:5-8

**SET UP:** Maintain side position. Bring the hand under the knee and reach for the ankle. Plant the top leg in front of the hip (knee high). Lower leg flexes the foot (toes to knee caps).

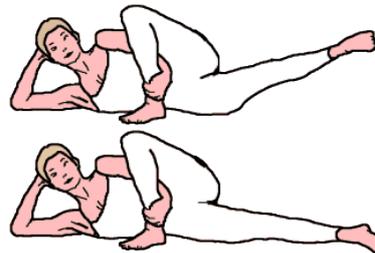
### Inner thigh lifts

### ACTION:

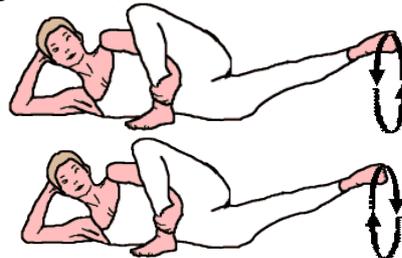
Lengthen the heel; lift lift! Lower; lower! Lift, lift; lengthen and lower.  
(2) Circle leg around and reverse. Use the space behind you.

### PRECISION:

Relax your shoulders wide and roll your shoulder blades down.  
Abdominals lift - no shift.  
Hold onto your "Box", shoulder over shoulder, hip over hip.



### Inner thigh circles, forward and reverse



## 20. MAT - BEATS ON BELLY TRANSITION

REPS: 6 - 18

**SET UP:** Roll onto your stomach; rest your forehead on the back of stacked hands, palms on floor. Press the heels together. Scoop abdominals. Clench the butt and lift the legs off the floor.

### ACTION:

Clench the butt and lift the legs off the floor. Beat the whole inner leg briskly together: "flubba, flubba, flubba flubba".

### PRECISION:

Lengthen the neck and the sides of the body.

1



2



## 21. MAT - TEASER-ONE LEG

REPS: 3-4 PER LEG

**SET UP:** Sit with knees bent, and thighs at 45 degrees to the mat. Extend one leg and press the knees together. Arms reach to the sky. Chest lifted, lower spine curved.

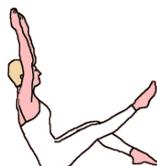
### ACTION:

(Scoop deeply at all times).  
Exhale to roll back onto the mat.  
Inhale to roll back up: reach to the knees, ankles, toes, ceiling, sit tall!

### PRECISION:

Shoulders relax wide.  
Bottom foot stays firmly planted on the floor.  
Glue the inner thighs together.  
Try not to throw yourself to get up but rather, .  
Roll smoothly down and up like a yo-yo.

1



2



3



4



**Easier version** – Maintain good posture while lowering a small distance.



## 22. MAT - SWIMMING PREP

REPS: 5 switches from one side to the other.

**SET UP:** Lie on stomach. Arms reach straight out in front in line with the shoulders and legs reach long and parallel behind. Nose to the mat, abdominals scooped in and up. All toes on ground, Lengthen!

### ACTION:

(a) Raise and reach the right arm and left leg equally, pause and lengthen 5 seconds –breath into the side of the ribs. Switch to the opposite arm and leg, and lengthen (5 seconds).

### PRECISION:

Even height of the arm and leg.  
Arms and legs reach away, and the back of neck is long, Body doesn't twist: chest and hips equal on the mat.



Easier version:- lift your head just off the mat (maintain length at the back of the neck), and let the lower leg and arm rest on the mat.

## 23. MAT - LEG PULL FRONT (PREP)

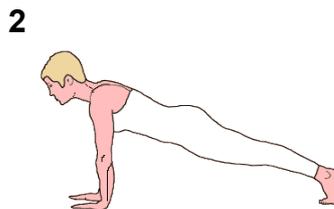
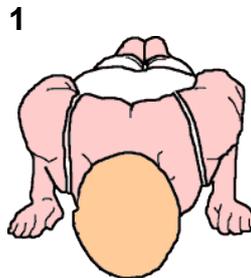
REPS: ONE – HOLD 10 SECS

**SET UP:** Place hands under your armpits and elbows close to ribs. Head, shoulders hips & heels in line, legs together, toe pads on the mat, abs lifted.

**ACTION:** Press up and hold your body long & still for 10 seconds.

### PRECISION:

Zip the lower belly and lengthen from crown to tail bone. Rise up through the shoulder blades. Elbow point backwards.



Easier version



## 24. MERMAID STRETCH

REPS: 3-4 WITH LEGS TO LEFT,  
THEN 3-4 WITH LEGS TO RIGHT

**SET UP:** Sit with your back lined up to the side of your mat and bring your feet to the left so that the sole of the right foot is against the left thigh and the left foot is just off the mat. The left arm is straight to the ceiling, "glued" to the ear.

**ACTION:**

(Imagine that all movement is between two sliding glass doors).

Inhale deeply then reach your left arm to the ceiling and over. Right hand hovers 6 inches above the mat.

(2) Lower to the side with elbow on the mat directly under your shoulder, palm down. Inhale deeply then reach long to the wall. Repeat on opposite side.

**PRECISION:**

Powerhouse pulls deeply in and up  
Long arm glued beside ear to reach.

**Easier version:-** Straighten the left leg and put it out in front. If you need to, hold onto your right foot for support when reaching to ceiling and over.

**Start Position:**



**To Ceiling and Over -**



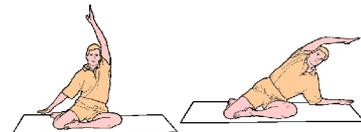
**To the Wall:**



**Easier Version -**



**Repeat w. feet to Right:**



## 25. MAT - SEAL

REPS: 6 -8

**SET UP:** Dive hands between legs and wrap around to rest on the outside of each ankle. Tip back to balance behind your sit bones. Softly point your feet with your toes together and heels apart. Create opposition by pressing out with arms and in with knees. Chin to chest, abdominals scooped, knees just outside line of shoulder.

**Caution:**

Do not grasp your feet or ankles!

**ACTION:**

Scoop your abs deep. Clap feet together 3 times with your whole leg, then inhale to roll back. (Balance on your shoulders, not your head). Clap heels together 3 times. Use your Abs, exhale and roll up.

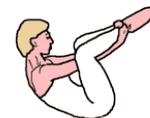
**PRECISION:**

Scoop and keep eyes on your belly button!  
Squeeze your knees together.

1



2



3



4



## NOTES:

### **(1) There's nothing basic about "basic"...**

Don't assume that this "basic" program of exercises is inferior to an "intermediate" or "advanced" program. The real advancement is not in the specific exercises, but rather in the skill and the diligence of the student. The unskilful practitioner will dream his or her way through a session with sloppy technique and therefore will not benefit. On the other hand, the skilful student will concentrate, and look for the challenge (and thus also the benefit) in every movement. That's when Pilates makes changes in people's lives.

### **(2) Stretching and supervision are essential for the best benefits to occur...**

This program alone covers much of what needs to be covered in a Pilates Conditioning program. In fact, in my opinion, it is world class in terms of time efficient total body conditioning. What remains to be covered is to be found in the "Stretches to Compliment Pilates Mat", and the specific advice and support of an experienced instructor (and of course the friendly encouragement of the classmates).