# Table of Contents

## Pilates Mat Manual

by Nora St. John

---

### EXERCISES

- The Hundred Preparation
- The Hundred
- The Roll Up
- Roll Over
- Single Leg Circles
- Rolling Like a Ball
- Single Leg Stretch
- Double Leg Stretch
- Single Straight Leg Stretch
- Double Straight Leg Stretch
- Criss Cross
- Spine Stretch Forward
- Spine Stretch Side
- Open Leg Rocker
- Modified Corkscrew
- Corkscrew
- Saw
- Swan
- Swan Dive & Swan Rocking
- Single Leg Kicks
- Double Leg Kicks
- Neck Pull
- Scissors
- Bicycle
- Spine Twist
- Jackknife
- Side Leg Lifts
- Side Leg Circles
- Side Leg Kicks
- Side Leg Bicycles
- Side Leg Bananas
- Teaser Preparation

---

Published by:
Balanced Body University
8220 Ferguson Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95828 USA

Toll-free from U.S. and Canada: 1-800-745-2837
Toll-free from United Kingdom and Israel: 00-800-7220-0008
Toll-free from South Africa: 09-800-7220-0008
From other locations: 916-388-2838
Email: info@pilates.com

1st Edition
Copyright © 2008 by Balanced Body University

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

For information on getting permission for reprints or excerpts, contact us at info@pilates.com.

Printed in the United States of America.
# Table of Contents

## Pilates Mat Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaser 1</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaser 2</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip Circles</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg Pull Down</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg Pull Up</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kneeling Side Kick</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seated Twist</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Bend Twist</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Bend Mermaid</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomerang</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seal</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push Ups</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat Sequences</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breathing started! a golf club or lifting your groceries out of the car. Let’s get call upon whether you are learning a new exercise, swinging make these principles habits that your body will automatically good idea of what you are trying to accomplish. Your goal is to section, practice each exercise several times until you get a illustrate each principle in action. As you go through this basis behind each principle is included along with exercises exercise both on the mat and on the equipment. The scientific principles are the heart of the method and are used in every fitness programs around the world. The Pilates movement foundation of rehabilitation, athletic training and physical movement and the essential use of the core at least 60 years before “functional fitness” and “core stabilization” became the the essential use of the core at least 60 years before “functional fitness” and “core stabilization” became the foundation of rehabilitation, athletic training and physical fitness programs around the world. The Pilates movement principles are the heart of the method and are used in every exercise both on the mat and on the equipment. The scientific basis behind each principle is included along with exercises to illustrate each principle in action. As you go through this section, practice each exercise several times until you get a good idea of what you are trying to accomplish. Your goal is to make these principles habits that your body will automatically call upon whether you are learning a new exercise, swinging a golf club or lifting your groceries out of the car. Let’s get started!

Breathing

Breathing is the first movement principle, because it is the foundation of our existence and creates the fundamental rhythm that underlies our life. Learning to breathe optimally is essential for health and well being. Breathing techniques can be used to decrease stress, lower or raise blood pressure, improve aerobic capacity and calm the mind and spirit. Breathing has been used by every culture to change mind and body states in meditation, exercise and daily living for thousands of years.

How breathing works: The diaphragm is the primary muscle used in breathing. It forms a dome inside the chest whose lower edge attaches to the bottom of the rib cage. Its attachment points include:

- The xiphoid process at the bottom of the sternum
- Costal cartilages of the lowest ribs
- 12th rib
- Lumbar spine

The other end of the diaphragm attaches to a tendinous ring that sits at about the level of the 5th rib when the diaphragm is at rest. On the inhale, the diaphragm contracts, drawing the top of the dome down toward the bottom of the rib cage. The diaphragm can move as much as 4 centimeters (approximately 2 inches) down with a full inhale. This increases the volume of the lungs and draws the air in. As the diaphragm relaxes, the dome rises back up and the air is pushed out of the lungs. In addition to the diaphragm, the following muscles are also involved in breathing:

- Intercostals (the muscles between the ribs)
- Serratus posterior superior and inferior (small muscles on the top and bottom of the back of the rib cage)
- Scalenes (connect the vertebra of the neck to the upper ribs)
- Upper trapezius (attaches the base of the skull to the shoulder girdle).

Breathing techniques can be used to facilitate movement, improve strength and increase mobility as well as to improve lung capacity and focus the mind. When using the breath to support movement you may find the following patterns useful:

- Exhale assists spinal flexion
- Inhale assists spinal extension
- Inhale assists lateral flexion
- Inhale or exhale can assist spinal rotation.

Each exercise includes a recommended breath pattern to get you started. If the pattern becomes too confusing or you can’t think about so many things at the same time, just remember to breathe.

Pilates Breathing Exercises

Diaphragmatic (belly) breathing

**Exercise sequence:** Breathe into the abdomen while imagining filling the torso up from the bottom of the pelvis with air. Place your hands on your abdomen and feel it expand on the inhale. On the exhale, draw the abdomen in toward the spine, pressing out the air to create a natural contraction of the core. As you breath in and out, imagine the dome of the diaphragm lowering on the inhale and rising on the exhale.

**Used for:** This is a relaxing breath that helps to increase the flexibility of the diaphragm and increase lung capacity. It can also calm the mind if you are feeling agitated or anxious. In Pilates it is used for increasing the engagement of the core on the exhale and for exercises where a sustained abdominal contraction is not required, as in Footwork on the Reformer.

Lateral (rib) breathing

**Exercise sequence:** Wrap a towel or strap around the lower part of the ribs just below the shoulder blades. Cross the band in front and hold the ends with the hands creating a slight amount of pressure on the ribs. Inhale and feel the ribs expanding into the band. Picture the dome of the diaphragm lowering and the ribs expanding like an umbrella opening on the inhale. Picture the diaphragm rising and the ribs contracting like a closing umbrella on the exhale.

**Used for:** Maintaining a sustained abdominal contraction as required in the Hundred and other abdominal exercises. This is
Double Leg Kicks

Intermediate • 3 - 6 sets

Starting Position
Lie prone with both hands clasped behind the low back and the head turned to one side.

Movement Sequence
- **Inhale** – Bend both knees and kick the heels toward the buttocks 3 times using a sniffing breath. Keep the front of the hips on the mat and the low back stable.
- **Exhale** – Engage the abdominals, straighten the legs, reach the hands toward the feet with the hands clasped and lift the torso into back extension. Keep the head in line with the spine. Lower the torso back to the mat with the head turned to the other side and the hands clasped behind the back.

Modifications
- **Tight Shoulders:** If you have tight shoulders, reach both hands toward the feet without clasping them together.

Optimum Form
The hips stay steady on the mat, the back extension is smooth and continuous and the head is in line with the spine.

Transition
Roll over onto the back with the legs straight and mat width apart for the Neck Pull.

Cueing and Imagery
- Keep the front of the hips on the mat.
  - *Press the hip bones into the mat as the legs kick.*
- Keep the head in line with the spine.
  - *Focus the eyes a few inches in front of the hands.  
  - As you are lifting the body up into extension, imagine you are watching a marble roll away across the floor.*
- Keep the abdominals engaged throughout.
  - *No sagging stomachs.*
- Reach the arms back toward the feet to open the front of the chest.
  - *Imagine you have a light on the front of your sternum and shine it straight ahead as you reach back.*
- Engage the back, gluteals and hamstring while keeping the torso long and without compressing the lower back.
- Reach the legs and arms out form the center of the body before going up into back extension.
  - *Imagine you are suspended in a cargo net with a rope on each limb.*
- Keep the lower legs in line with the thighs.
  - *Imagine you have a spring attached from your sit bones to your heels.*

Purpose
- Strengthen back extensors, hamstrings and gluteals
- Stretch the quadriceps
- Stretch the chest and anterior shoulder

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, limit range of motion in extension, place a pillow under the hips or avoid.
- **Knee problems** – Limit the range of motion in knee flexion. Stretching the quadriceps before this exercise can also be helpful at decreasing knee discomfort.
Leg Pull Down

Intermediate 4 – 6 sets

**Starting Position**
Plank position with the shoulders over the wrists, the inner thighs together and the torso in one line from head to feet.

**Movement Sequence**
- **Inhale** – Lift one leg up toward the ceiling with the foot pointed and pulse it two times. Dorsiflex 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.

**Modifications**
- **Beginning version:** Begin in an all fours position and lift the leg from there.
- **Wrist Discomfort:** In order to accommodate wrist injuries or discomfort, use push up handles or hexagonal metal hand weights or place the forearms on a sitting box or yoga blocks so no weight is on the wrists.

**Optimum Form**
The body is in one line from the head to the feet throughout the exercise. The legs reach high up toward the ceiling without disturbing the hips. The shoulders are wide and the neck is long.

**Transition**
Move one hand close to the other and roll over so both hands are on the mat and the body is facing up for Leg Pull Up.

**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, semitendinosis, semimembranosus) and gluteus maximus

**Precautions**
- **Wrist injuries** – Use the modifications above or avoid.
Starting Position
Sit on the side of one hip with the knees bent and the top leg in front of the bottom leg. Place the supporting hand under the shoulder.

Movement Sequence
- **Inhale** – Pull your navel to your spine and send the hips up toward the ceiling as the legs straighten. As the hips rise, reach the arm up toward the ceiling and then reach it under the torso to reach toward the feet. The weight is on the front foot. The back leg is resting just behind the front ankle with the foot off the floor.
- **Exhale** – Return to the starting position, smoothly folding the legs and lowering the hips to the mat.

Modifications
- **Wrist Discomfort:** Use handles for the weight bearing arm.
- **Two leg balance:** Use the back leg for support if balance is difficult on the front leg alone.

Challenges
Lift the back leg up and pulse it toward the ceiling or draw small circles with the leg while maintaining the balance on the supporting arm.

Optimum Form
Press straight up into the final position keeping the shoulder down and the arm pressing into the mat.

Transition
Press up into a side plank for Side Bend Twist and Side Bend or sit up straight with the legs together for Boomerang.

Cueing and Imagery
- Suck the abdominals in to send the hips up to the ceiling. - *As if you are being lifted up by the waistband of your pants.*
- Press the standing arm into the mat, keeping the neck long and the space between the neck and the shoulder wide.
- Balance on the standing foot. - *Imagine the final position before you get there.*

Purpose
- Strengthen the entire body including the core, scapular stabilizers and lumbopelvic stabilizers
- Strengthen the lateral torso, including the oblique abdominals, latissimus dorsi and quadratus lumborum
- Strengthen the shoulder girdle, including the latissimus dorsi, serratus anterior and rotator cuff
- Improve core control, balance and coordination

Precautions
- **Back injuries** – Avoid.
- **Shoulder, elbow and wrist injuries** – Use the hand support modification or avoid.