

PILATES BASICS AND IMPROVER EXERCISES

Exercises included will provide you with a balanced workout, but do not feel as though you have to do all exercises in one session. Please work at a pace that feels right to you.

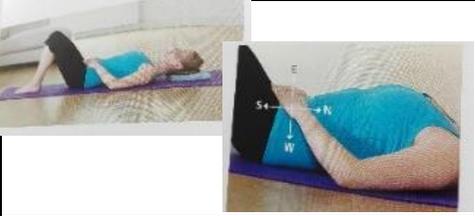
Image	Exercise Name	Exercise Description
	Relaxation / Pillow Squeeze + Engage Pelvic Floor and lower abdominals (Transversus abdominis)	Focus on relaxing and feel the body melt into the mat. Weight should be through the head, back of ribcage and back of pelvis (sacrum). There should be a feeling of lightness through the lower back (lumbar). On exhale, zip up from back passage to front (urethra): lower deep abdominals should naturally engage/flatten. Maintain tone and hold for a few breaths and the release. Tummy should feel firm (like a bouncy trampoline) but not rock solid. Do not over recruit!
	Relaxation Position/Pelvic Tilts	Rock pelvis towards you (pubic bone towards navel) on exhale, and flatten lower back to floor. Rock pelvis away from you on inhale and arch lower back. Repeat several times releasing tension from the lower back. Settle with pelvis inbetween these mid points i.e. neutral. The Mid and upper back should be heavy onto mat, weight through back of head also
	Knee Drops/Knee Openings	On exhale, lower 1 bent knee sideways towards floor, on inhale return to centre. Pelvis is neutral. Rest of body and supporting leg are completely still. Repeat with other leg. Also nice to do both legs together (opposite directions) to get an adductor (inside thigh) stretch.
	Knee Rolls	Start with legs shoulder width apart. Maintain neutral spine and pelvis throughout. On exhale, engage core and left both knees roll over to one side as far as possible. Inhale and draw legs back to start position. Keeps hips as relaxed as possible. Think windscreen wipers as the thigh bones roll from side to side. Good for tight hips
	Shoulder Drops	Start with a neutral pelvis and spine. Reach arms to ceiling, inside arms/palms facing inwards. Inhale, peel one shoulder blade off the floor, before lowering on the exhale. Repeat with the other arm. Try to get a sense of creeping the shoulder blades a bit further apart from one another i.e. gaining width through the back of the shoulders/upper back. As a variation, lift and lower both arms together. When lifting, stay long in the neck, heavy in the chest, and think about reaching from the armpit to the little finger.
	Ribcage Closure	Inhale arms above chest, Exhale (tummy to spine) and reach both arms to ears. Pelvis is neutral, ribs stay soft. Avoid arching the back but feel a sense of weight through the back of the ribcage. Return on inhale and exhale to lower hands to the floor next to your hips.

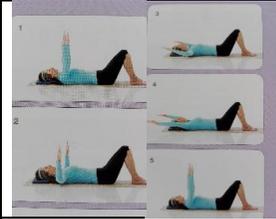
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	Chicken Wings	Lie on mat. No need for a pole! Start with arms outstretched above head (as in Ribcage closure). Inhale and bend elbows drawing elbows to hips, arms running parallel to floor, exhale back to Ribcage closure (arms by ears). Good if you are tight in your chest and shoulders, have rounded shoulders or just spend long hours at a desk
	Windows	An alternative to Chicken Wings. Start with arms above chest, inner arms facing forward. Exhale bend the elbows. Inhale rotate forearms to floor. Exhale extend arms into ribcage closure (i.e. stretching out). Inhale return to start position. Watch for the upper back arching and the ribs lifting. Keep spine and pelvis in neutral.
	Single Leg Slide / Double Leg Slide (with Ribcage Closure)	Start in relaxation position, neutral pelvis. On exhale, slide 1 leg forward with heel in line with hip joint. On next exhale, draw heel towards the bottom, to the start position. Maintain neutral throughout and don't let the pelvis tip forward or backward (arch or imprint). Try Double Leg Slides too - you will need to engage your abdominals more to maintain a neutral pelvis and spine. You may wish to add on Ribcage Closure arms as the legs slide forward.
	Single Knee Fold	Pelvis and spine in neutral (ribs heavy on mat). Exhale (tummy to spine) and draw right leg in, inhale lower (release tummy muscles). Repeat with left leg. Avoid tilting pelvis, doming tummy and arching back. Also nice to combine with Leg Slide (above) so that the two movements flow one after the other, maintaining a completely still pelvis and spine throughout
	Double Knee Fold (& Toe Taps)	Pelvis and spine in neutral (ribs heavy on mat). Exhale (tummy to spine) and lift right leg and then the left leg by bending the knee and hip to 90 degrees. Avoid tilting pelvis, doming tummy, arching back or getting tense in the upper body. Inhale and maintain the position (knees over hips). Exhale and lower 1 leg at a time. Toe Taps: start in Double Knee fold - Exhale, tap the floor with 1 toe (increase abdominal recruitment) and inhale to lift the leg (reduce abdominal recruitment). Swap legs and repeat several times, taking care to maintain neutral pelvis and spine
	Knee Circles / Leg Circles	Start in a Single Knee Fold position with pelvis and spine in neutral. For Knee Circles, keep the shin bone parallel to the ceiling: exhale start to draw a circle on the ceiling with the shin bone. Inhale and complete the circle. Circle a few times each direction. Maintain stillness through the body by recruiting core muscles. You may lengthen the leg and do leg circles as a more advanced option, but you may wish to support the leg with a band or belt.

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	Spine Curls	On Exhale, engage pelvic floor/abdominals, roll pelvis towards you, imprint lower back and wheel spine off mat, bone by bone until you get to the tips of the shoulders (mid/upper back) and reverse. Once you have warmed up the spine, add on Ribcage Closure Arms at the top of the spine curl (i.e. reach arms overhead). Lower body, then lower arms
	Curl Ups	Start with a chin tuck, peel upper body off mat bone by bone. Inhale and hold at top, exhale and lower to start. Head stays heavy in hands. Pelvis stays still and in neutral. Keep legs muscles and glutes relaxed and not recruited.
	Hip Rolls	Connect inside thighs and feet. Arms in low "V" to "T" position, palms upward. On Exhale, tummy to spine and roll pelvis and waistline to left. Inhale and hold. Exhale to return. Keep both shoulders and backs of arms in contact with mat. Keep legs and feet together. Repeat on other side. Progression: Hip rolls Legs Up - start in a double knee fold and rotate pelvis and waistline to one side, hold (breathe in) and use tummy muscles (naval to spine) to return
	Waist Twist Sitting	Sitting correctly. Arms crossed in front of the chest. On Exhale, rotate head, neck, breastbone, ribcage. Inhale to return. Repeat other direction. Think of spiralling head to ceiling. Both hips stay facing forward with weight on both sit bones.
	Side Reach Sitting	Sitting Correctly. Inhale and float right arm up to ear. Exhale (tummy in) lift up and over to left into side reach. Inhale hold. Exhale return. Repeat. Avoid bending forwards or backwards.
	Rollbacks/Rollups (full version, rolling to mat and back)	Start sitting correctly. Inhale into a C Curve (pelvis tilts so bottom tucks under), upper body flexes forward and tummy pulls in. Exhale, roll torso backwards away from legs as far as possible, maintaining a curved spine (i.e. roll bone by bone). Inhale hold. Exhale restack to sitting. For the full rollback, exhale and roll spine sequentially to the mat, inhale hold, exhale rollup to sitting

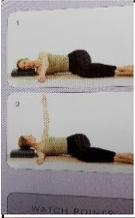
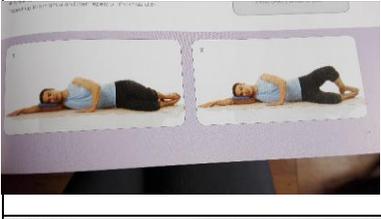
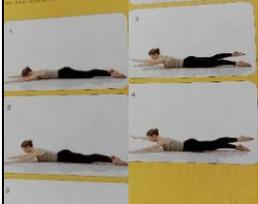
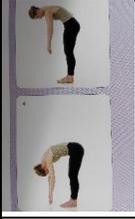
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	Arm openings	Lie on side with both knees bent and shins parallel to front edge of mat. Hips and shoulders are vertically aligned stacked. Arms reach out in front of chest. Inhale and reach top arm to ceiling. Exhale, soften chest and rotate upper body towards ceiling as much as possible, keeping still through the hips and legs. Reach arm backwards, using the arm to encourage the spine to rotate more.
	Side Lying Legs Series: a) Lift & lower, b) Forward & Back c) Circles	Lengthen top leg in line with spine. Top leg starts at hip height. A) Lift & Lower: lifting on the Exhale (tummy to spine), lower leg on inhale. B) Forward & Back: inhale reach leg behind body, exhale kick leg forward. C) Small Circles, circling from the top of the leg. All Side-Lying exercises, body stays still by using core muscles. Avoid arching or rounding the spine. Ribs stay soft, hips stay stacked.
	Oyster	Lie on one side. Bring knees forward but keep both heels in line with back of spine. Press heels together. Exhale lift the top leg as far as possible (keeping the hips stacked) and Inhale to lower. Repeat
	Diamond Press	Hands under forehead. On exhale, gently draw tummy in, nudge nose a small way, peel head, neck and chest a small way off mat, bone by bone. Inhale and hold the position. Exhale and lower, initiating by feeling heavy in the chest. Avoid compressing lower back. Draw tummy in more if needed, or place a small cushion or towel under the tummy/pelvis
	Dart	Hands by side of body, inner arms facing ceiling. Big toes together, heels apart. Exhale, engage the core and extend the upper body away from the mat. At the same time, rotate the arms inward (inner arms to sides of body) and thighs and heels together. Inhale hold, then exhale release.
	Star	Arms outstretched, shoulder width apart and lift upper body into a small extension (back bend). On exhale, gently draw tummy in, lengthen and lift right leg and left arm. Inhale lower. Exhale repeat on left leg. Avoid compressing lower back. Keep weight equal in both hips. Upper body is still but lifted. If this is too challenging for the lower back, put fingers under forehead and lift legs only.

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	Rest Position/Childs Pose	Rest bottom on heels and reach arms forward. Inside thighs are squeezed together. Try and rest head to floor. Abdominals are scooped upwards and inwards to maximise flexion (curve) of lower back, to release lumbar spine after extension (backbend) exercises
	Cat/Cow	On exhale, tuck bottom under and round lower back, then mid and upper back, bone by bone. Tuck chin under. Inhale and hold. Exhale release to start, lengthening head and tailbone away at same time. Continue with upper body by opening throat and drawing chest forward so upper back goes into slight backbend. Avoid crunching the neck backwards
	Table Top	On exhale, slide right leg backwards. Tummy to spine. Lift/lengthen right leg and left arm. Inhale and release, slide leg in. Repeat on other side. Avoid arching back or twisting the pelvis. If this is difficult due to low back pain or instability, keep both hands in contact with the floor and lift the leg only.
	Stand Correctly	Equal weight between both feet. Equal weight between ball and heel of foot. Soft through knees. Pelvis directly under ribcage. Feel a sense of length between tail and mid back (bra-stap region). Soften ribcage and ensure ribcage isn't overly elevated (pocking out). Ensure ear lobe is inline with the tip of your shoulder, so you may need to draw the head backwards. Grow taller (think of a helium balloon lifting you upwards from the crown of your skull!). Long back of neck. Eye gaze forward and chin parallel with the floor. Shoulders are relaxed and arms hang slightly forward of the body
	Floating Arms	Exhale and float both arms to ears. Inhale lower. Focus on keeping body still and ribs soft as arms reach upwards. Let shoulders be free of tension. Keep arms slightly forward of body.
	Side Reach Standing	Standing Correctly. Inhale and float right arm up to ear. Exhale (tummy in) lift up and over to left into side reach. Inhale hold. Exhale return. Repeat. Avoid bending forwards or backwards.

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	Waist Twist Standing	Stand correctly. Arms crossed in front of chest. On Exhale, rotate head, neck, breastbone, ribcage. Inhale to return. Repeat other direction. Think of spiralling head to ceiling. Both hips stay facing forward with weight on both feet.
	Rolldowns	Start standing correctly with feet hip width and pelvis in neutral. Exhale, tuck chin and start to roll upper body down towards the floor, bone by bone, maintaining a neutral pelvis as much as possible. Engage the abdominals lightly as you do. Inhale (into the sides and back of ribcage) at the bottom. Exhale to roll back to standing, from the base of the spine to the head (head coming up last).
	Pilates Squats	Stand Correctly hip width apart i.e. in a neutral spine and pelvis position. Bend the knees, hips and ankles and reach the arms forward for balance, maintaining a neutral pelvis and spine. The torso will pitch slight forward as you squat. Maintain length through the neck, so the eye gaze will also drop down slightly as the torso leans forward. Press through the heels and backs of legs to stand up straight again, bringing arms next to the hips
	Stand on 1 Leg	Assume above standing correctly position but bring feet and legs together. Inhale to prepare, then exhale and engage the abs (think navel to spine) and peel 1 foot off the floor, maintaining an upright position without arching the spine or flaring the ribs. Try and maintain a sense of the hip drawing down away from the armpit as the leg lifts. Aim to get at least a 90 degree angle in the hip joint with the thigh parallel with the ceiling, with a flat back/neutral spine.