

Pilates

What is Pilates?

"The Pilates method of body conditioning is a unique system of stretching and strengthening exercises developed over ninety years ago by Joseph H. Pilates. It strengthens and tones muscles, improves posture, provides flexibility and balance, unites body and mind, and creates a more streamlined shape." Pilates was developed to create a healthy body, a healthy mind, and a healthy life, and has become very popular in the last five or so years in the quest to attain balance in our lives. Many people are realizing that while exercise should be an important part of our lives, it should add to and not take away from our enjoyment of a full life. We don't need to spend endless hours of time chained to the gym in order to live a healthy life style. Advocates of Pilates, maintain that individuals can minimize the amount of time spent in a gym or in front of an exercise video, but maximize the results achieved from a full-body work out. They maintain that the poor physical condition many of us are in today comes from the imbalance of engaging in complicated, inefficient exercises that isolate certain body parts while neglecting others. The Pilates philosophy focuses on training the mind and body to work together toward the goal of overall fitness. Joseph Pilates used muscle control to highlight his unique approach of using the mind to master the muscles. "Ideally, our muscles should obey our will. Reasonably, our will should not be dominated by the reflex actions of our muscles."

Matwork Principles

While Pilates draws from many diverse exercise styles such as Chinese acrobatics to yoga, there are certain ruling principles that bring all of these elements together under the Pilates name:

Concentration

Concentration is the key element to connecting your mind and body. Pay attention to the movements you perform notice how your muscles respond to the attention.

Control

Muscle control means no sloppy, haphazard movements. In this way, you are more likely to avoid injury and produce positive results.

Center

Most people use their arms and legs rather than their center when going about their daily tasks. All energy for the Pilates exercises initiates from the powerhouse—the large group of muscles that encompasses the abdomen, lower back, hips, and buttocks. Physical energy is exerted from your center to coordinate movements, thus building a strong foundation upon which you can rely in daily life.

Fluidity

A focus on the grace of motion is emphasized over speed, and ultimately the movements should feel as fluid as a “long stride or a waltz.”

Precision

Every movement in the Pilates method has a purpose. To leave out any detail is to forsake the intrinsic value of the exercise. Focus on doing one precise and perfect movement over many halfhearted ones.

Breath

In order to achieve his ideal of total fitness, Joseph Pilates designed his method to cleanse the bloodstream through oxygenation. By inhaling and exhaling fully, you are expelling stale air and noxious gases from the depths of your lungs and replenishing your body with fresh air to energize and revitalize your system.

Intuition

Most of us push our bodies through pain, sickness, and exhaustion, often resulting in discomfort and injury. "The Pilates method is based upon the ideal of well-being and is not another mind-numbing, quick fix solution to fitting into a bikini by summer. Do not force what is not natural. If something hurts, Stop!"

Integration

Integration is the ability to see your body as a comprehensive whole. Each exercise employs every muscle from your fingertips to your toes. The Pilates method never isolates certain muscles and neglects others. Uniformly developed muscles are the key to good posture, suppleness, and natural grace. Your mind is the coach and the muscles of your body are the team!

Exercises

- The Pilates 100
- The Roll-up
- Rolling like a ball
- Single leg circles
- Single leg stretch
- Double leg stretch
- Single straight leg
- Double straight leg
- Crisscross
- Spine stretch forward
- The Saw
- Side Kick Series
- The Seal

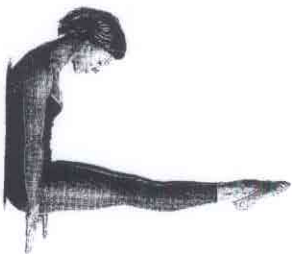
The Pilates Body, by Brooke Siler, Broadway Books, 2000.

THE HUNDRED

BEGINNER

Step by Step

1. Lie on your back and pull your knees into your chest. Inhale deeply, and as you exhale sink your chest and belly into the mat beneath you.
2. Keep that *feeling of a weight pressing your torso down* as you bring your head up to look at your belly. (Make sure you are folding forward from your upper back and not your neck.)
3. Stretch your arms long by your sides and reach forward until you feel the bottom of your shoulder blades sinking into the mat beneath you.
4. Straighten your legs to the ceiling, squeezing the buttocks and backs of the upper inner thighs together until no light comes through them.
5. *Begin pumping your arms straight up and down as if you were skipping water.* (Keep the movement slightly above the mat and your arms straight.)
6. Inhale for five counts and exhale for five counts, reaching ever forward as you breathe.
7. Lower your legs to a forty-five-degree angle, or to the point just before your spine arches off the mat.
8. Maintain this position, pumping your arms and breathing for one hundred counts.
9. End by lowering your head and bringing your knees back into your chest before stretching yourself out to full length to prepare for the Roll-Up. . . .



The Hundred is a breathing exercise meant to circulate your blood to warm up the body in preparation for the exercises to follow.

The Inside Scoop

Q **O**ne goal of the Hundred is to be able to maintain a steady, flat back with your feet held at eye level. This is no easy task in the beginning, so do not push yourself to the point of strain.

- K** **E** **Y** **E** **S** Make sure you are always focused on the weight of your belly as it sinks into your spine.
- Keep your shoulders pressing away from your ears to stretch the neck muscles and increase the abdominal focus.
 - Squeezing the buttocks and backs of the upper inner thighs will provide stability for your lower back.

N **O** **T** **E** **R** Drop your legs past the point of comfort for your back. You should be able to maintain a flat back and scooped belly throughout.

- M** **O** **R** **I** **F** **I** **C** **A** **T** **I** **O** **N** **S** To your lower back begins to hurt, simply bend your knees in toward your chest.
- If your neck hurts, rest it back down on the mat and then try again, making sure you are lifting from the area around the back of your chest and not from the neck itself.

P **R** **E** **S** **T** **R** **E** **T** **I** **O** **N** **S** **I** **N** **O** **R** **D** **E** **R** your exhalations to get longer and longer in order to improve your cardiovascular capacity.



BEGINNER THE ROLL-UP

Step by Step

1. Stretch out to your body's full length, *the way you might stretch your waking body as you get up in the morning.*
2. Squeeze your buttocks lightly and press the backs of your upper inner thighs together.
3. Flex your feet into the Plantes stance and bring your straight arms forward over your head.
4. As your arms pass over your chest, lift your head and inhale as you begin to roll up and forward.
5. *Imagine that your lower body is strapped down to the mat, stabilizing you, just below the hip bones.*
6. In order to feel the articulation of your spine it is helpful to imagine this rhythm: Lift your chin to your chest, lift your chest up over your ribs, lift your ribs up over your belly, lift your belly up over your hips, and try to lift up out of your hips and over your thighs.
7. Exhale as you stretch forward from your hips while keeping your navel pulled back into your spine. This is opposition at work!
8. Initiate rolling back down by squeezing your buttocks and slightly tucking your tailbone underneath you. Inhale as you begin pulling your navel to your spine.
9. Reversing the sequence of the exercise, exhale as you feel each vertebra pressing into the mat beneath you. Keep squeezing the backs of your upper inner thighs together for stability.
10. When the backs of your shoulders touch the mat, lower your head and bring your arms over into a full-body stretch before beginning the movement again.
11. Complete three to five repetitions and end by lying flat on the mat with your arms long by your sides for the Rollover. . . .

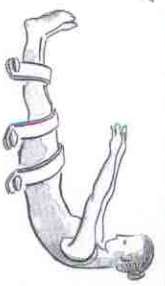
NOTE: If you are a beginner, go on to the Single Leg Circles. . . .



The Roll-Up stretches and strengthens the spine by articulating the vertebrae.

The Inside Scoop

- **GOALS** remain perfectly still in your lower body as you articulate your spine.
 - **KEY** Try to feel the fluidity of the movement as you go.
 - Use the oppositional forces of pulling back in your belly as you stretch forward so you do not flop.
 - Remember to squeeze the backs of your upper inner thighs together to keep the lower body still. *Imagine you are gripping a small ball tightly between your ankles or the backs of your inner thighs.*
 - Keep your chin tucked into your chest as you roll forward and back so that you are not pulling from your neck. Think of curling yourself forward, stretching, and then slowly uncurling back onto the mat, lengthening your spine as you go.
- NO-NOS**
- Do not roll up using your neck and shoulders. Use the muscles of your powerhouse.
 - Do not allow your body to flop forward as you stretch.
 - Do not allow your legs to lift off the mat as you roll up.



BEGINNER

ROLLING LIKE A BALL

Step by Step

1. Sit toward the front of your mat with your knees bent into your chest and grab your ankles. Keep your heels glued together and your elbows extended.
2. Open your knees slightly and lift your feet off the mat until you are balancing on your tailbone. Your chin is tucked into your chest and you should feel *you have taken on the roundness of a ball*.
3. Initiate the rolling by sinking your navel deep into your spine and falling backward, bringing your knees with you. Do not throw your head back to begin the movement.
4. Inhale as you roll back and exhale as you come forward, placing emphasis on pulling your heels in tightly to your buttocks as you come up.
5. *Imagine you are in a rocking chair that is about to tip over, and quickly bring yourself back up.*
6. Each time you come forward, "put on the brakes" and balance on your tailbone. Do not allow your feet to touch the mat.
7. Repeat the Rolling Like a Ball five or six times and prepare for the Stomach Series by sitting back on your mat and pulling one knee into your chest. . . .



Rolling Like a Ball is an abdominal exercise that improves balance and massages the spine.

The Inside Scoop

GOAL As tightly tucked as possible throughout the entire movement.

KEY Momentum is the key here. (The more slowly you roll back, the less chance you have of making it back up!)

- Try to feel each vertebra as it presses back into the mat, *like running up the scale of a xylophone.*
- Remember to pull your abdominals in and keep your head and neck supported throughout the rolling movement.
- Keep your elbows extended.

DO NOT ALLOW your head to fly back and forth throughout the movement. Keep it securely tucked into your knees.

- Do not roll back onto your neck; think of stopping at the bottom of the shoulder blades instead.
- Do not allow your shoulders to creep up around your ears.

PROGRESS CHALLENGE try placing your head between your knees and wrapping your arms around your legs instead of holding at the ankles.



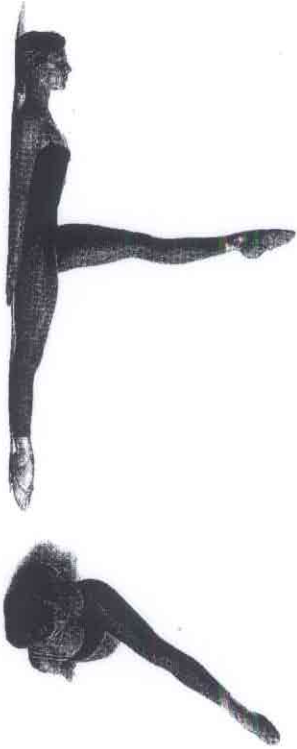
As you progress be sure that your heels stay glued to your bottom throughout the rolling movement.



BEGINNER
SINGLE LEG CIRCLES

Step by Step

1. It helps to begin this exercise with a stretch by pulling one knee into your chest, then straightening it to the ceiling while holding your ankle or calf.
2. Bring your arms back down by your sides and leave your leg reaching straight up to the ceiling at as close to a ninety-degree angle as you can manage. Lengthen the back of your neck by pressing it to the mat.
3. Your opposite leg should be centered and reaching long in front of you for stability.
4. Stretch your leg across your body, then circle it down, around, and back up to its starting position. Keep your leg slightly turned out at your hip so that the back of your hip maintains contact with the mat. Do not allow your leg to swing too far to the outside of the hip joint.
5. *Imagine drawing circles on the ceiling with your leg.*
6. Complete three to five repetitions inhaling as you begin the motion and exhaling as you complete it. Then reverse the direction of your leg and complete three to five repetitions, making sure you remain stabilized in your hips at all times.
7. Repeat the stretch with circles with the other leg.
8. End the Single Leg Circles by bending both knees and rolling up to a sitting-position. Lift your bottom forward to your heels to prepare for Rolling Like a Ball...



The Single Leg Circles articulate and strengthen the leg in the hip joint, and stretch the iliofibial band (muscle running along the outer part of the thigh).

The Inside Scoop

GOALS Remain completely still in your hips and torso as you circle your leg.

KEYS The accent for this exercise is on the upswing, where you must utilize your

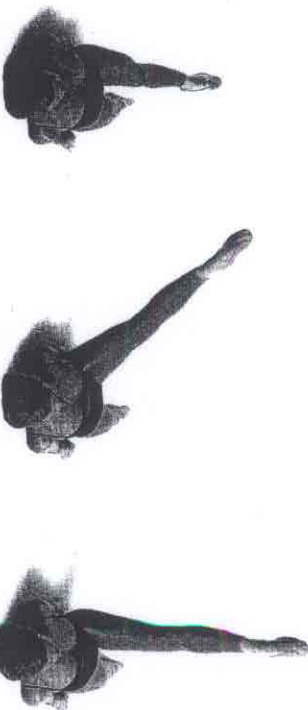
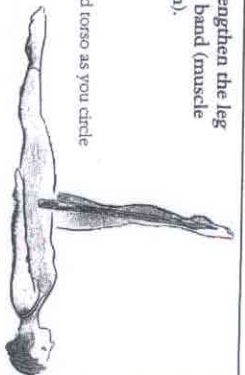
powerhouse to control the movement. Try to hold your leg steady at the end of each circle to feel your abdominals at work.

- Press your palms into the mat for added stability.
- In order to stop the quadriceps from doing all the work, turn your leg out slightly in the hip and think of engaging your buttock to help perform the movement. (If your hip clicks or pops, readjust your leg position and remember to squeeze your buttocks.)

NOTES Make sure that your knee does not turn inward as you circle the leg. Think of leading with the *inside* of your knee instead.

- Make sure that you do not drop your leg so low as to cause your back to arch off the mat. (If necessary, bend your opposite knee slightly to maintain a flat back.)
- Do not tilt your head back or lift the back of your chest off the mat.

PROGRESSION As you progress, you can gradually increase the size of your circles. Make sure to maintain control in the hips throughout!



SINGLE LEG STRETCH

Step by Step

1. Sit in the center of your mat with your knees bent. Take hold of your right leg and pull it into your chest with your inside hand on the knee and your outside hand on the ankle. (This will keep your leg in proper alignment with your hip.)
2. Roll your back down to the mat, bringing your bent leg with you.
3. Extend your opposite leg out in front of you and hold it above the mat at an angle that allows your back to remain flat on the mat.
4. With your elbows extended and your chin lifted onto your chest, inhale and watch as your navel sinks deep into your spine.
5. *Imagine you are anchored into the floor below.*
6. Exhale and switch legs, bringing the outside hand to the ankle and the inside hand to the knee. Stretch your extended leg long out of your hip and in line with the center of your body.
7. Repeat five to ten sets of the Single Leg Stretch and then pull both knees into your chest and go on to the Double Leg Stretch. . . .



This is the first of five exercises termed the "Stomach Series." They are meant to flow from one to the next without changing the initial body position.



The Inside Scoop

GOALS Lifted and perfectly still in your torso as you perform the sequence.

KEYS Lifting forward from the abdominals and the back of your chest.

(Keep your eyes on your belly.)

- Scoop your belly in at all times and press your spine *further* into the mat as you switch legs.
- Keep your elbows extended and your shoulders pressing down and away from your ears in order to best utilize your abdominals.
- Squeezing the buttocks as you extend your leg will help ensure the integrity of your leg position.

NOTE Roll forward from the neck itself.

- Make sure you are not lowering your extended leg below hip level. Keep it at a height that enables you to maintain a flat back.

MODIFICATIONS

- For a bad back, extend the straight leg to the ceiling only. As your lower abdominal strength improves, you will be able to begin lowering it to a more challenging angle.



DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

BEGINNER

Step by Step

1. Lie on your back and pull both knees into your chest, elbows extended and head lifted.
2. Inhale deeply and stretch your body long, reaching your arms back by your ears and with your legs long out in front of you and raised off the mat at about a forty-five-degree angle, as if you were stretching before getting out of bed in the morning.
3. *Imagine your torso firmly anchored to the mat*, as you did in the Single Leg Stretch, and do not allow your head to move off your chest.
4. As you exhale, draw your knees back into your chest by circling your arms around to meet them.
5. Sink your belly further from your knees to increase the emphasis on the exhalation, as if you were compressing air out of your lungs.
6. Repeat the sequence five to ten times, remaining still in your torso as you inhale to stretch and exhale to pull.
7. End by pulling both knees into your chest with a deep exhalation and go on to the Single Straight Leg Stretch.

NOTE: Beginners go to the Spine Stretch Forward.



Second of the Stomach Series. Works the powerhouse and stretches the body.

The Inside Scoop

GOALS Remain perfectly still in your torso as you perform the movements.

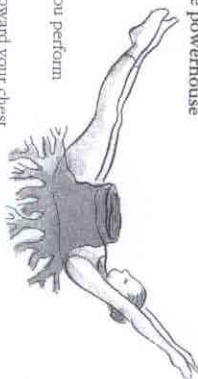
KEYS Support your neck by keeping your chin toward your chest as you stretch long.

- Squeeze your buttocks and upper inner thighs together tightly as you extend your legs to support your lower back.
- As you inhale and stretch out, make sure your arms are straight and feel as if you are being pulled in two directions with only your abdominals to hold you down on the mat.

TIPS If you press your knees up against your hands and increase the distance between your knees and chest as you exhale, keeping your elbows extended, you will feel a nice release in your upper back and neck area.

MODIFIER your head fall back as you stretch your arms above your head.

MORPHOLOGY As your lower abdominal strength increases, you will be able to begin lowering your legs to a more challenging angle.



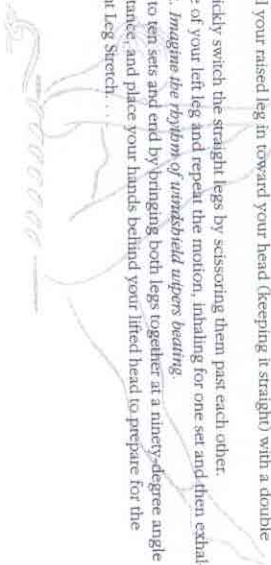
DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

SINGLE STRAIGHT LEG STRETCH

Step by Step

1. Lie on your back and pull both knees into your chest, elbows extended and head lifted.
2. Extend your right leg straight up to the ceiling and grab your ankle with both hands as you stretch your left leg long in front of you, keeping it hovering slightly above the mat.
3. *Imagine anchoring your torso firmly to the mat* and keep your head lifted onto your chest.
4. Exhale and press your spine deeper into the mat beneath you.
5. Inhale and pull your raised leg in toward your head (keeping it straight) with a double bounce.
6. Exhale and quickly switch the straight legs by scissoring them past each other.
7. Grab the ankle of your left leg and repeat the motion, inhaling for one set and then exhaling for one set. *Imagine the rhythm of tankshield wipers beating.*
8. Complete five to ten sets and end by bringing both legs together at a ninety-degree angle in the Pilates sunbed, and place your hands behind your lifted head to prepare for the Double Straight Leg Stretch.



Third of the Stomach Series. Provides for an additional stretch in the back of the legs while still working the abdominal region.

The Inside Scoop

GOAL Remain perfectly still in your torso as you stretch and scissor your legs.

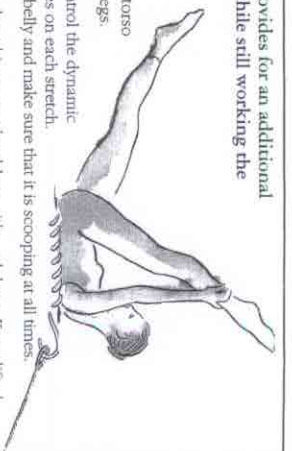
KEYS Use your sense of rhythm to control the dynamic of this exercise, with small pulses on each stretch.

- Keep your eyes focused on your belly and make sure that it is scooping at all times.

NOTE ~~Make sure~~ you are not sinking or hunching your shoulders with each beat. Keep lifted from the back of the chest area instead.

REMINISCENT This stretch proves too difficult in the beginning, hold lower down on your leg. Try your calf first, and if it is still too difficult, move your hands to the back of your thigh. Do not hold behind your knee.

PROGRESSION Version, try the exercise with your arms reaching long by your sides. Use control and common sense. If it hurts your neck or lower back, stop.

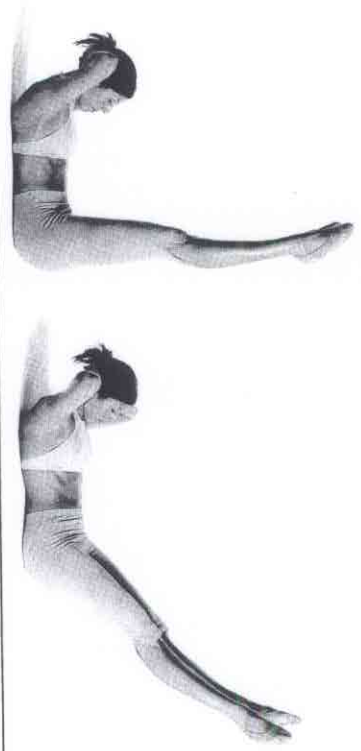


DOUBLE STRAIGHT LEG STRETCH

INTERMEDIATE

Step by Step

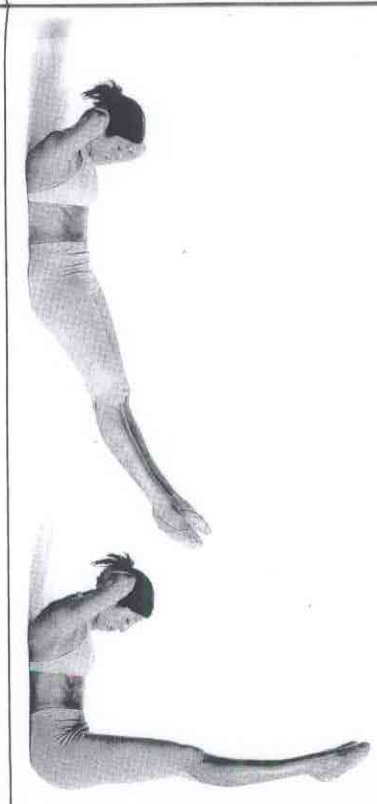
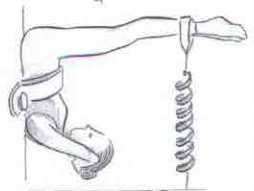
1. Lie on your back with your hands, one on top of the other (not interlaced), behind your lifted head.
2. Extend your legs straight to the ceiling in the Pilates stance. Squeeze your inner thighs together until no light comes through them.
3. Anchor your center firmly to the mat and lift your head onto your chest. Remember: you are lifting from the back of the shoulders and the abdominal muscles, not from the neck, so do not allow your hands to pull the weight of your head forward.
4. Squeeze your buttocks, for stability in your lower back, and lower your straight legs down toward the mat as you inhale. Stop when you feel your lower back begin to arch off the mat.
5. Squeeze your buttocks tighter and exhale as you raise your straight legs toward the ceiling again. You should feel your chest pressing slightly toward the legs as they return to their upright position.
6. *Imagine your legs are attached to springs above your head and you must stretch the springs on the way down and resist their pull on the way back up.*
7. Repeat five to ten times and end by bringing both knees into the chest to prepare for the Cisscrosss.



Fourth in the Stomach Series, Targets the powerhouse to the extreme. Upper and lower abdominals help power the stretch up the backs of the legs.

The Inside Scoop

- **GO AHEAD** Remain perfectly still in your torso, with a flat back, as you lower your legs to the floor.
- **KEEP** your elbows extended and press your shoulders down and away from your ears to stretch the muscles of your neck and further increase the focus on the abdominals.
- To accentuate the control element of this movement, keep a slight turnout in the hip and thigh and squeeze extra tight as you bring the legs back up, pressing your chest toward your thighs as you do.
- Make sure you maintain a scooped belly throughout the movement and press your back into the mat beneath you. Feel as though your belly button is lifting and lowering the legs.
- **DO NOT** allow your back to arch off the mat as you lower your legs.
- Do not allow your legs or feet to pass your belt line. Stop when they are directly perpendicular to the ceiling.
- **ATTENTION** If the beginning, and for as long as it serves you, place your hands in a V position just below your tailbone (palms down). This position will help support your lower back.
- **FOR AN ADDED CHALLENGE**, try changing the dynamic of the exercise by switching the accent from the lifting up to the lowering down. (Change the breathing accordingly.)



INTERMEDIATE
CRISSCROSS

Step by Step

1. Lie on your back with your hands behind your lifted head and your knees bent into your chest.
2. Extend your right leg out long and above the mat in front of you and twist your upper body until your right elbow touches the left knee. Inhale as you lift to twist.
3. Make sure you are *lifting from below your shoulder* to reach the knee and not simply twisting from the shoulder socket.
4. Look back to your left elbow to increase the stretch and hold the position as you exhale. Make sure your upper back and shoulders do not touch the mat as you twist and hold the stretch.
5. Switch the position by inhaling and bringing your left elbow to your right knee while extending the opposite leg out in front of you. Hold the stretch as you exhale completely.
6. *Imagine your spine anchored to the mat so that you don't rock from hip to hip.*
7. Complete five intersets and then pull your knees tightly into your chest.
8. Roll up to sitting and straighten your legs out in front of you to prepare for the Spine Stretch Forward.



The last of the Stomach Series, the Crisscross works the external obliques, waistline, and powerhouse.

The Inside Scoop

There are many ways of cheating during this exercise! Here are the major ones.

- **N**o **M**ake sure you are lifting and twisting from your waist and not from your neck and shoulders.
- **K**ee **P** Keep your elbows extended as much as possible throughout the movements and do not allow them to fold in or to touch the mat as you twist.
- **B**e **S**ure to actually look back to your elbow as you twist so you can work deeper into your obliques (and even strengthen your ocular muscles).
- **D**o **N**ot rush through this exercise. Really feel the twist and hold the position as you exhale completely.
- **D**o **N**ot allow your outstretched leg to drop too low in front of you. Maintain control by squeezing your buttocks.
- **D**o **N**ot rock your body from side to side as you go. The steadier you remain, the more efficiently you are working.

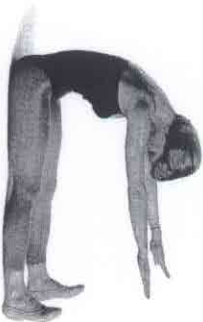
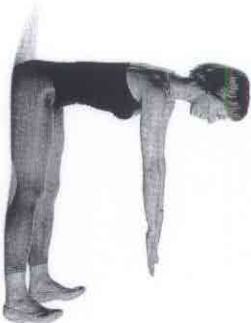


SPINE STRETCH FORWARD

BEGINNER

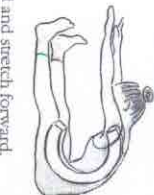
Step by Step

1. Sit tall with your legs extended straight out on the mat in front of you and open to slightly wider than your hips' width.
2. Straighten your arms out in front of you and flex your feet as if you were pressing your heels into the wall across the room.
3. Inhale and sit up even taller as if the crown of your head were pressing up and through the ceiling above.
4. Bring your chin to your chest and begin to round down toward your belly, forcing the air out of your lungs. *Imagine you are forming the letter C with your body.*
5. Exhale as you stretch forward, simultaneously pulling in your abdominals. *Imagine you are stretching over a beach ball held between your legs. Squeeze the imaginary ball with your upper inner thighs as you lift your chest up over the top.*
6. Inhale and reverse the motion of the exercise: rolling up as if constrained by a wall behind you.
7. Exhale as you return to your tall seated position, pressing your shoulders down and stretching your arms long in front of you. *Really feel your back stretching flat up against the imagined wall behind you.*
8. Repeat three times with the goal of increasing the stretch down the spine with each repetition. End by sitting tall and bending your knees in toward your chest to prepare for the Open-Leg Rocker.



The Spine Stretch Forward articulates the spine and enhances good posture. It also stretches your hamstrings and empties stale air from your lungs.

The Inside Scoop



GOALS To keep your hips stable and your belly pulling back as you round and stretch forward.

KEYS As you roll up to sitting make sure you are lifting from your powerhouse and not initiating from your head. (Your head should be the last part up.)

- Press your shoulders down and away from your ears as you roll yourself up to release the muscles in the back of your neck. Keep the crown of your head stretching toward the ceiling.

- Think of pulling your baby toes back toward you as you stretch forward.

- Breathe through the stretch to control the movement.

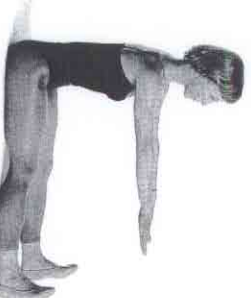
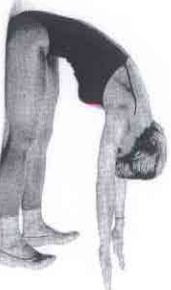
- Try to feel as if you are creating space between each vertebra as you roll up.

NOTES Do not let your knees roll inward as you stretch forward.

- Roll not back but up as you return to your tall seated position.

- Do not hold your breath, as this creates more tension in your body and limits your progress.

PROGRESSION As you progress try to increase the stretch by pulling deeper into your spine with each repetition.

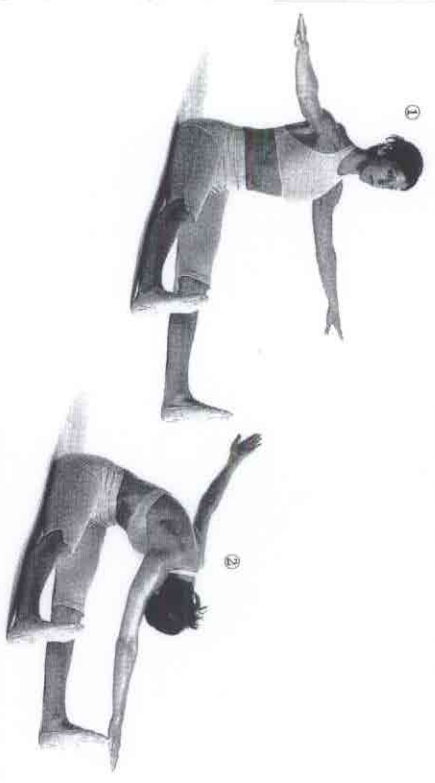


B F I N G S T R E T C H F O R W A R D

INTERMEDIATE
THE SAW

Step by Step

1. Sit up as tall as possible, with your legs extended and open slightly wider than your hips' width. Flex your feet and push your heels out from under you.
2. Stretch your arms out to your sides as if you were reaching out to touch both sides of the room at once.
3. Inhale and pull your navel up and into your spine, imagining you are stretching the crown of your head up and through the ceiling above.
4. Twist from your waist to the left. Make sure your opposite hip remains pressing down into the mat beneath you. *Imagine you are sitting in a block of cement and are able to move only from just above your hips.*
5. Bring your head and chest toward your right leg, stretching your left arm forward and just past your baby toe. Allow your pinkie finger to brush by the baby toe as if it were a saw.
6. Continue to stretch your chest to the right as you deepen the exhalation. Feel your opposite hip deeply imbedded in the cement and unable to move. Stretch the crown of your head toward the baby toe and lift your back arm in opposition.
7. Inhale and draw your body up, initiating from the navel, into the starting position.
8. Repeat the sequence to the right, exhaling deeply as you stretch your head and chest toward the left leg.
9. Complete four sets and then flip onto your stomach to prepare for the Swan Dive...



The Saw is a breathing exercise that wrings the stale air from the bottom of your lungs. It works the waistline and stretches the hamstrings.

The Inside Scoop



GOALS To keep your hips absolutely still as you stretch past your baby toe, with straight legs and back arm lifted.

KEYS Stabilize your hips as you stretch in each direction. Think of pressing your opposite heel forward and sitting on the opposite buttock as you stretch. Roll up to a tall seated position and inhale before twisting to the other side. Think of filling your lungs with air and then wringing them out as you twist on the exhalation. Once again, initiate coming up from the powerhouse (abdominals and buttocks). Your head should be the last part to come up. (Remember to sit up, not back.)

NOTES Do the crunch up in your neck as you reach past your baby toe. Lengthen from the crown of the head instead. Do not allow your knees to roll in as you stretch forward.

MODIFICATION If difficult, simply soften the opposite knee, or both knees if necessary. As your flexibility increases, begin keeping both legs absolutely straight throughout.



