

Pilates

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Pilates is a combinational form of exercise for any gender which can be performed from low to high intensity depending on which specific exercises you do. Pilates is typically done in a circuit or casual sets and reps, ideally slow and controlled is the mother of Pilates this is because it is well known for its simple but effective movements. You can do fast paced types which target different wants or needs depending on someone's goals. Personally I absolutely love slowly engaging the different muscle groups and focusing on breathing as it's quite meditative and relaxing. Pilates can also be used for rehabilitation which is amazing.

There are different forms of Pilates which range from **mat**, **classical**, **hot mat**, **reformer**, **trapeze reformer** etc. I like to include both mat and reformer into my workout routine as both have their own separate benefits and I absolutely enjoy the two.

Working out is supposed to be **fun** and **enjoyable** so any type of activity that gets you moving should be your main goal. Choosing which type of Pilates will depend on your goals and what you know you will continue with as **consistency** is what gets you results whether it be for your **heart**, **body**, **mind** or **spirit**!

Pilates focuses on **core strength**, **flexibility**, and **body alignment**. It helps improve **posture** and **balance**, which can reduce the risk of injuries. It targets deep muscles, which can lead to better overall strength and **stability**. Additionally, it promotes **mind-body connection** and can help **relieve stress**. It's a great workout for both physical and mental well-being. What's not to love? Anyone can start and progress up to different intensities and levels.

Which one should I choose?

Well it comes down to a few factors, mat is easily accessible, doesn't cost any money but also gives you the option to attend classes and caters to beginners very well. Reform Pilates can feel like a more advanced form of Pilates but can be for beginners due to its multiple springs which offer separate intensities. It may be hard to engage the correct muscles if you start out in reformer, reform Pilates can be on the costly side so I found **Class Pass** to be amazing for saving money. It gives you a variety of studio's to try out until you find the one you love most, in Australia Goodlife offers free trials to both reformer or mat so if you want to give it a go without stressing about the price for trying something you may not like. Without any commitment, this is a great opportunity to find out what you love!

Muscle engagement & form

To **engage** your **core** during Pilates, think about drawing your belly button in towards your spine. This helps activate your deep abdominal muscles. Keeping your abdominal muscles gently contracted throughout the exercises. Also, focus on maintaining good posture by stacking your ribs over pelvis to avoid flare in ribs (scar tissue) and injuries, make sure to maintain a neutral spine when not on your back. Practice makes perfect, make sure you DO NOT suck in as this is the leading cause of scar tissue. **Breathing** is essential to engagement and smoothness, deeply breathe into through your nose into your diaphragm and breathe out slowly through your mouth.

Although Pilates involves **lengthening** exercises it is extremely important to do **5-10** minutes of **warming up** such as **dynamic** stretches before you do Pilates to get full range of motion. It is equally essential to do **5-10** minutes of **static** stretches at the end of any exercise session to **cooldown** the body and make sure joints don't become stiff afterwards. This is a key factor in getting benefits from Pilates including **mobility** and **flexibility**. The more flexible you are, the more of a stretch and result you will get unless you're **hyper-flexible** then it may be different.

Dynamic stretching examples/ Warm up

- Arm circles, leg swings, cat and dogs & lunges
- Dynamic stretches are to have movement the entire time and can be performed in reps
- Walk/Jog

Static stretching examples/ Cooldown

- Child's pose, toe touch, butterfly stretch and side reach
- Static stretches are to be held for a period of time
- Walk

This is one example of how you could incorporate mat pilates & low intensity cardio into your weekly schedule ♥

Monday - Total rest & reset	Toe taps	Leg circles
Tuesday - 1 Hour walk	Pelvic bridges	Hydrants
Wednesday - Mat Pilates + 30 min walk	Bridge thigh squeezes	Side lying leg lifts
Thursday - 1 Hour walk	Dead Bugs	Flutter kicks
Friday - 1 Hour walk	Bicycles	Single leg stretch
Saturday - Reformer Pilates + 30 min walk	Pilates hundreds	Scissor kicks
Sunday - 1 Hour walk	Toe reaches	Bear plank

You can follow an 8 rep pattern for beginners and choose any of these exercises if you wish, there are plenty more exercises you can access. These are just some of my favourites!