

Go with the

Flow!

Add calorie-blasting cardio to your repertoire with this nonstop, total-body mat workout.

by Tamara Newell

Think you can't get a heart-pumping workout from doing Pilates? We beg to differ! This flowing, total-body mat sequence, created by Pilates instructor and former ballerina Tamara Newell, was designed to make you break a sweat—while upping your graceful quotient to boot.

"A traditional mat workout takes one exercise and repeats it several times before moving on to the next one," says Newell. "This series, designed to resemble a dance, will have you doing just one rep of each exercise, using transitions to move you smoothly from one exercise to the next. The transitions become exercises themselves!"

The following routine, which should be performed up to three times a week, is appropriate for all levels. "This sequence challenges your mind/body connection, coordination and endurance and it will tone the entire body," says Newell.

Move it to the mat—and don't stop moving!



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Roll-Up



PURPOSE: strengthens the powerhouse; develops spinal articulation; enhances flexibility

SETUP: Lie on your back with your legs long and zipped together. Lengthen your arms back by your ears, making sure they are straight, palms facing forward. Keep your shoulder blades down and together, and your abs scooped.



1. Lift your arms up toward the ceiling, then curl your chin toward your chest and lift your head and shoulders off the floor.

2. Peel your spine off the floor one vertebra at a time, deepening the scoop of your abs and reaching your arms forward as you roll up.

3. Continue to roll up until your arms are parallel to the floor, keeping your abs scooped, your shoulders down into the back and your neck relaxed.

TIPS: Imagine that you're rolling up and over a large beach ball. Hollow out your abs and create flexion equally throughout the spine.

MODIFICATION: Do a Half Roll-Down: Sit tall with your knees bent hip-width apart and feet on the floor. Extend your arms in front of your body at shoulder height, palms facing in. Roll back halfway to the floor.

modification



TRANSITION 1



PURPOSE: increases flexibility; stretches the hamstrings; develops coordination and control

SETUP: Maintain your position from step three of Roll-Up, then sit up tall and deepen the scoop of your abs.

1. Take hold of your left ankle or calf with both of your hands, pointing your left foot.

2. Keeping your torso as close to your leg as possible, use your arms and abs to extend your leg out to a 45 degree angle.

3. Breathe into the stretch and hold for about 10 seconds, making sure your shoulders and neck are relaxed.

TIPS: Maintain your core connection and focus on moving with control and fluidity. Remember: As you get more advanced in your practice, the transitions will become exercises as well!

MODIFICATION: Slightly bend your knee. Your supporting leg can be bent with your foot on the floor as well.

ADVANCED: Lift your leg to 45 degrees, nose to knee without using your hands.

modification



Tree



PURPOSE: promotes control, flexibility and spinal articulation; strengthens the core, hamstrings and quadriceps

SETUP: Maintain your transition position, holding your left ankle/calf and engaging your core even deeper.

1. Extend your left leg toward the ceiling, keeping your foot pointed, leg straight and chest close to your leg.

2. Continue sending energy through your leg toward the ceiling as you walk your hands down your leg.

3. Slowly lower your torso to the floor, then place your arms by your sides while keeping your left leg extended straight toward the ceiling.

TIPS: Rely on your core control, not your arms, to lower your torso to the floor. Press your supporting leg's hamstring into the mat for stability. Articulate the spine as you lower your torso down.

MODIFICATION: Slightly bend your knee.

ADVANCED: Lower your torso down without using your hands.



modification



Single-Leg Circle



PURPOSE: strengthens the powerhouse; challenges core, pelvic and back stability; works hip mobility; promotes hamstring flexibility

SETUP: After lowering your torso to the floor from Tree, keep your left leg extended toward the ceiling. Your head and neck are relaxed, and your arms are by your sides and pressing into the floor.

1. Circle your left leg clockwise, moving it across your body and downward.

2. Finish the circle by lifting your leg straight up toward the ceiling.

3. Reverse the circle.

TIPS: Keeping your hips stable is more important than making large circles—keep the circles within the frame of your body. Press your triceps into the floor for extra support, and think of reaching your working leg out of your hip to lengthen it as much as possible.

MODIFICATION: Keep your supporting leg bent with your foot flat on the floor and your working leg slightly bent.

ADVANCED: Lift your supporting leg one inch off the floor, and curl your head, neck and the tips of your shoulders off the floor. Add 3–5 circles in each direction.



Single Straight-Leg Stretch



PURPOSE: strengthens the core and hip muscles; increases hamstring flexibility; challenges shoulder girdle stability

SETUP: Lie on your back, and curl your head, neck and shoulders off the floor. With your elbows slightly bent, hold onto the back of your right calf and lift your left leg a few inches off the floor, feet pointed.

1. Engage your core deeply as you pull your right leg in toward your body.

2. Scissor your legs, bringing your left leg in toward your body as you extend your right leg out above the floor.

3. Place your hands around your left calf, and pull your leg in toward your chest.

TIPS: Focus on using your core, not your hands, to scissor your legs. Keep your shoulders blades down into your back.

MODIFICATION: Keep your head down throughout. Keep your knees slightly bent and hold on behind your thigh.

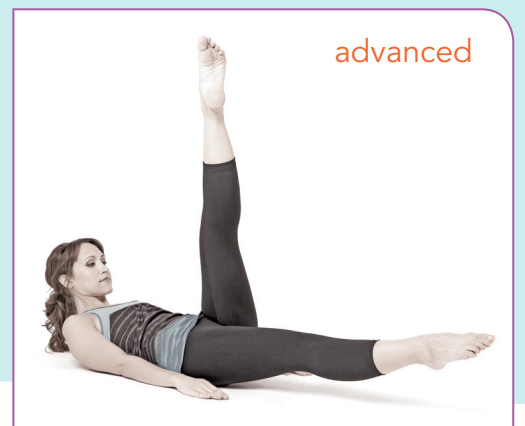
ADVANCED: Increase the size of the scissors, holding onto your foot. Add 5 repetitions.



modification



advanced



TRANSITION 2

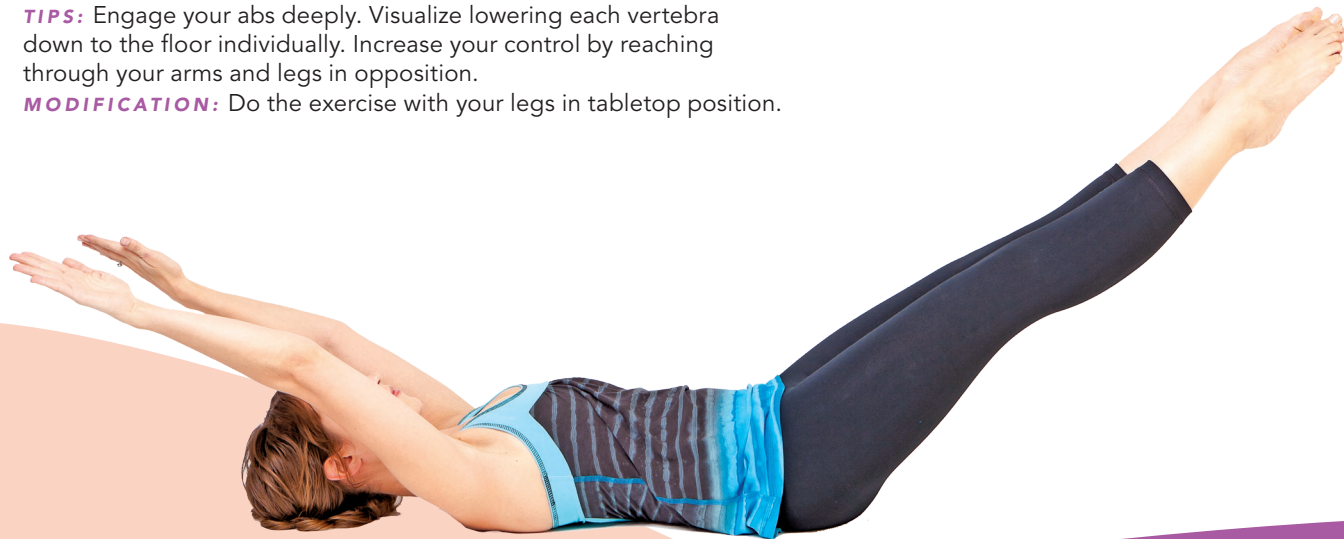


PURPOSE: improves spinal articulation and coordination; strengthens the core, adductors and quadriceps
SETUP: Stay lying on your back with your head, neck and shoulders curled off the floor, and reach both of your legs out to a 45 degree angle while extending your arms toward the ceiling.

1. Slowly roll down through your spine, lowering your torso, then your head, to the floor but keeping your legs extended to 45 degrees and your arms reaching back.

TIPS: Engage your abs deeply. Visualize lowering each vertebra down to the floor individually. Increase your control by reaching through your arms and legs in opposition.

MODIFICATION: Do the exercise with your legs in tabletop position.



Teaser



PURPOSE: increases powerhouse control
SETUP: Stay in the end position from Transition 2, but place your feet in Pilates stance, heels together and toes apart.

1. Reach your arms up toward the ceiling, palms facing forward.

2. Curl your head up and begin to roll up through your spine.

3. Roll up to a Teaser position with your legs extended to a 45 degree angle, arms parallel to your legs. Make sure not to come up onto your sitz bones; instead, keep your pelvis slightly tucked and your chest open.

TIPS: Keep your shoulders down, and look up past your fingers once you reach the top of the Teaser.

MODIFICATION: Begin with your arms extended toward the ceiling and keep your legs in tabletop position throughout.

ADVANCED: Add 3 leg lower/lifts at the top of the Teaser.



Open-Leg Rocker



PURPOSE: challenges primary (core muscles) and secondary (shoulder girdle) powerhouse control; increases hamstring flexibility; enhances lumbar spine flexibility and articulation

SETUP: Stay in Teaser position, holding onto the back of your calves or ankles, and open your legs to shoulder width.

1. Scoop your abdominals and tuck your tailbone deeply until you begin to rock backward.

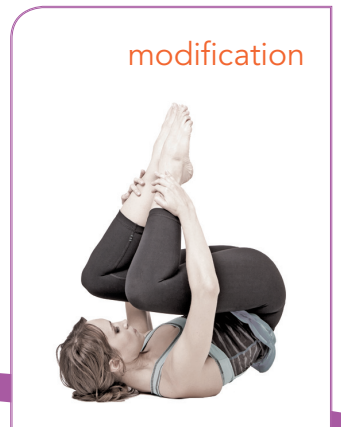
2. Roll through your spine to the tips of your shoulder blades, sending your legs overhead.

3. Using your abdominals, rock back up to the starting position.

TIPS: To challenge your core as much as possible, begin and finish the exercise while sitting past your sitz bones. Control the movement—avoid “popping up” onto your sitz bones after rocking back up.

MODIFICATION: Keep your legs in tabletop position and hold behind your thighs. Or, do Rolling Like a Ball instead, holding onto the tops of your ankles and keeping your legs bent into your torso as much as possible as you roll. Try keeping your body in as tight of a “ball” as possible without letting your shoulders rise up or gripping your ankles.

ADVANCED: Keep your legs parallel and zipped together, feet flexed. Challenge your stability while stretching your hamstrings by holding onto the bottom of your feet as you roll back.



TRANSITION 3



PURPOSE: allows for a fluid transition into the second repetition of the series

SETUP: Stay in Open-Leg Rocker position, but let go of your ankles and zip your legs together with your feet in Pilates stance, heels together and toes apart. Extend your arms up by your ears.

1. Slowly roll through your spine to lower your entire body down to the floor simultaneously.

TIPS: Reach your upper and lower body in opposite directions for increased control and length.

MODIFICATION: Bend your knees and place your feet flat on the floor and hip-width apart before rolling down.

Repeat sequence, switching to your other side for Roll-Up, Teaser and Open-Leg Rocker! **PS**



Former ballet dancer Tamara Newell first discovered Pilates more than 15 years ago while studying at the Joffery Ballet School. She continued her training by earning a dual BA in Dance and Communications from Marymount Manhattan College. The NYC-based instructor completed her certification through Core Pilates NYC and is currently the Director of Pilates at The Yoga Room (www.the-yoga-room.com) and a former instructor at Reebok Sports Club/NY. Tamara, who's also a fitness and commercial model and actress, is the creator of Peace Joy Pilates, and she regularly pens the wordpress.peacejoypilates.com blog. Her philosophy is to inspire others to live a balanced and healthy lifestyle through a holistic approach to exercise and life. For more information, visit www.tamaranewell.com.