



A UK Style Pilates Workout

Compiled by Bruce Thomson

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Disclaimers: (1) This program is not intended to replace the advice of a medical professional. (2) The writer has made every effort to assemble a set of safe and well trialled instructions, however as you will be aware, all exercise involves a degree of risk.

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Introduction

This workout series is modelled and expanded upon a set of workouts designed by Lindsay Jackson for women before during and after pregnancy "Pilates in Pregnancy". As such, it is a little less dynamic and a little gentler than the New York Style of Pilates, and considerably more body awareness and stretching is included. Do not however assume that you will not have a good workout! - There is still considerable mental and physical work. For example, you will need to develop the Pilates principle of "flowing through the movement" to make it come alive for you!

Some quotes from Lindsay Jackson's "Pilates in Pregnancy":

Quote: "One woman noted that her separated tummy muscles have now come back together after 3 kids".

Benefit: Flatter stronger tummy muscles.

Quote: "Many women state that the back ache they have suffered with for years is now gone".

Benefit: Less back ache.

Quote: "Many women have told me that they can now sneeze, laugh and jump without fear of leakage".

Benefit: Pelvic floor strengthened and maintained.

Quote: "The control used in the special breathing techniques can help you focus during labour".

Benefit: The control developed will help you focus on better use of your body in any situation, not just birthing.

Quote: "Your new postural awareness will help you with every day things like sitting driving, and even carrying your children".

Benefit: You become more productive, and life becomes a little easier.

Standing Warm up

(1) Ski Poling

Setup:

- Zip the lower abdomen and stand with feet 3 inches apart and parallel.
- Balance the weight over the middle third of the heel.
- Imagine you are holding ski poles!

Action:

1. Reach high and a little forward of the head, and come up onto the balls of the toes (weight spread over balls of toes one to three).
2. Push with the poles until your arms are reaching high toward the back wall.
3. Clench the buttocks, and return.

Repetitions: Five slowly and with resistance; Five with flow.

Precision:

- Exhale to “push with the poles”, and inhale to return.
- Breathe into the sides of the ribs and upper back.
- The pace is steady, and dictated by the breathing.
- Pause at the top and at the bottom of the movement to check that the weight is centred over the heels and the balls of the toes.



(2) Pony (20)

<p>Setup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand with feet 3 inches apart and insides of feet parallel. • Balance the weight over the centre of the heel around the ball of the second toe. 	<p>Action:</p>			
 <p>Come up onto the balls of your toes.</p>	 <p>Bring right knee forward, and left heel down.</p>	 <p>Come up onto the balls of your toes.</p>	 <p>Left knee forward and right heel down.</p>	

Repetitions: 10 each side with weight even over both legs; then 10 each side with weight over the heel that is moving.

(3) Wide Stance Plie

Setup

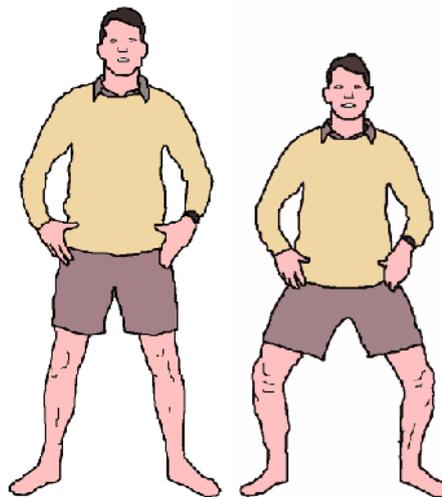
- Stand with heels just over a hip width apart, and feet pointing 45 degrees outwards.
- Zip the lower abdomen, and the shoulders wide.

Action:-

1. (Knees wide and buttocks clenched at all times).
2. Inhale to lower, and exhale to rise.

Precision:

- Spread the toes wide.
- Centre your weight on a line through the middle of the heel and the ball of the third toe.



Repetitions: 8-10

(4) Heel raise and squat (5)

Setup:

- Feet 3 inches apart and in parallel.
- Spread the toes.

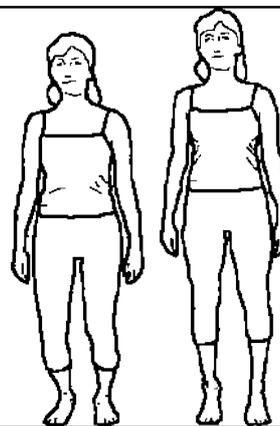
Action:

1. Bend knees and ankles to lower (knees forward over second toe).
2. Rise up onto the balls of the toes.

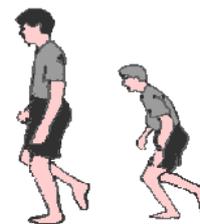
Precision:

- Inhale to move; exhale to hold at the each end of the movement. This will awaken the sense of balance.
- Weight is centre of the heel at all times.
- When squatting, the weight is centred around the balls of toes 2 and 3.
- At all other times, the weight is centred around the ball of the second toe.

Repetitions: 8 to 10



Advanced: do it one legged! -



Mat work

(1) Roll Downs with Box Push Ups (5-10 repetitions)

1. Roll down.
2. Walk forward with hands.
3. Bend knees into crawler position,
4. Hips stay in the same position as you lower your forehead between your hands
5. Reverse the movement until standing tall.

Precision:

- Elbows bend towards the hips, not to the sides (not as in picture).

Alternatives:

Knee push ups (straight line from knees to crown of head), or full push ups (straight line from heels to crown of head).



(2) "Bird Dogs"

Setup:

- Place your spine in its midrange between flexed up like an arch and extended downward like a hammock.
- Imagine a glass of Glass of champagne on small of back
- Zip lower abdomen.

Action:

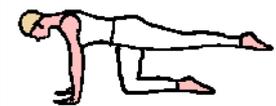
- Inhale to move the limb out.
- Exhale to bring the limb back.

Start Position:

(Fully and slowly flex and arch the back three times before finding the mid range).



Arms only
3-4 each side



legs only
3-4 each side



Arms and legs together
3-4 each side

(3) The Ski Ramp

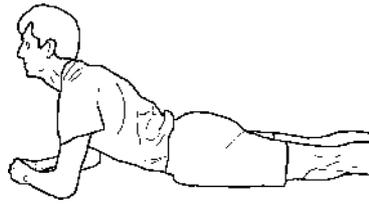
Setup:

- Bring your hands under your nose, and grasp a thumb.
- Place your elbows just wide of your shoulders.

Action:

(Form a ski ramp!)-

1. Pull your thumb off, and rise up between your shoulder blades.
2. Breathe into the sides of ribs and upper back and shine breast bone forward.



Imagine your back is ski ramp: strong, stable, with a single smooth curve for the skier to travel down.

Hold for 15 to 30 seconds!

(4) Flight

Setup and Action:

1. Zip, (imagine making a tunnel for a mouse to run through), and roll your shoulder blades away from your ears.
2. Raise your shoulders, arms legs and head.
3. Reach fingers and toes to a point high on the back wall, and breathe into the sides of the ribs and upper back.
4. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds.

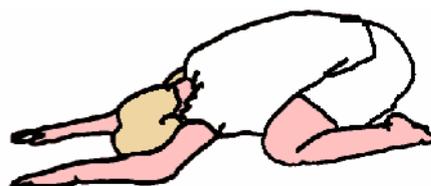
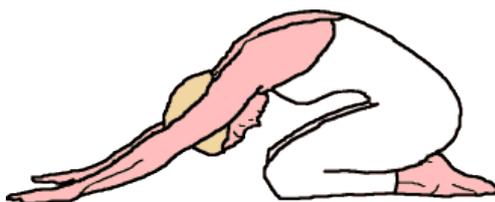
Precision:

1. Roll shoulder blades away from ears!
2. Breathe into sides of ribs and upper back and shine breast bone forward.



(5) Relaxation Position

Sit back on heels and then slide hands forward.
(Hold 15 to 30 seconds).



(6) Backward Kneeling

Setup:

From the rest position, sit on your heels and walk the hands backwards until they are behind you.

Look upward to a point of the ceiling above your knees

Action:

Zip! Clench the buttocks!

Press the knees together as you lift the pelvis as high as it will go.

(Repetitions: 5-8)



Modifications:

Prop yourself on your fingers.

Place a pillow between heels and hips.

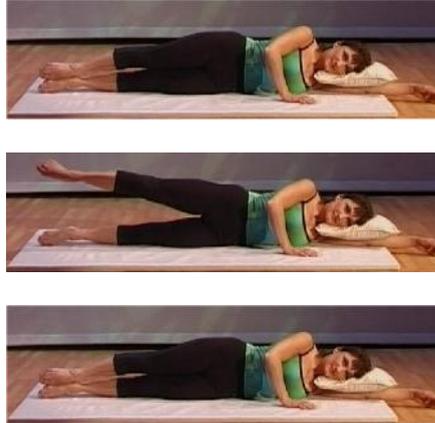
(See appendix for an **alternative stretch** for the front of the thigh).

(7) Side Lying Leg Raises

Setup

1. Lie on your side on a knife edge.
2. Zip, and
3. Make sure that your spine is parallel with the floor, and not sagging in the middle.
4. (The heels shoulder be even)
5. Turn the upper leg out a little so that the knee cap "looks upward" in the direction of the ceiling.

(a) Upper leg only



Repetitions:
Five

Breathing tips:

(If confused about breathing, forget any strict order: just zip, breathe, relax!)
Exhale to aid smooth flow through the hardest part of the movement.

1. In part (a), exhale on the downward part.
2. In part (b), exhale is during the lift of the lower leg and the lowering of both legs (just take a quick little breathe when both legs are high).

Counter Stretch:

(See picture: Sit tall, and wrap the opposite elbow around the bent knee, and the opposite hand around the straight knee).

(b) Double leg action



Repetitions:
Five

Counter Stretch:
Hold for 15 to 30 seconds



(8) Leg Raises (other side)

(10) Supine Taylor Stretch

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and together, then lower the knees to the side.
2. Place the arms like rugby goal posts.
3. Do your best to conform your back and the backs of your arms and hands to the mat.

Relax into this position for a minute or more.

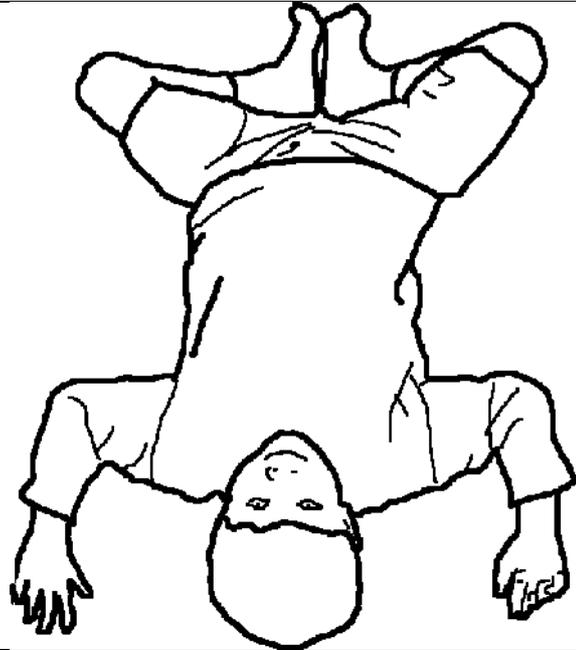
Tip:

You need to use your Pilates muscle skills:

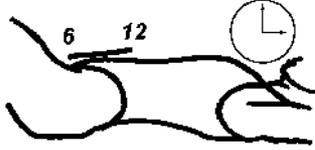
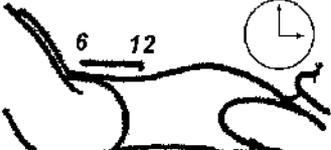
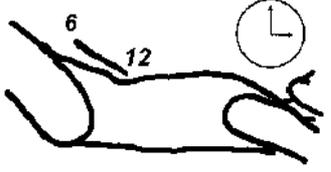
- Zip the lower abdomen!
- Breathe into the sides of your ribs and upper back!
- Roll the shoulder blades away from your ears!

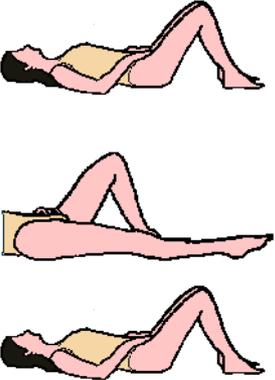
And keep all other body parts relaxed.

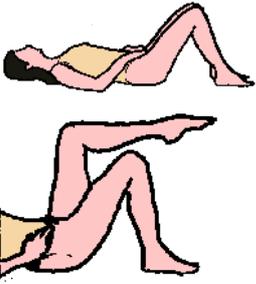
Hold for 15-60 seconds



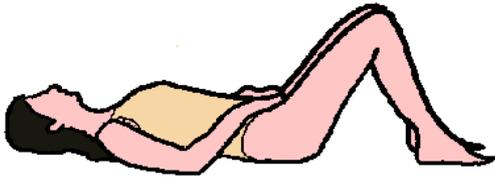
Working with neutral spine and pelvis

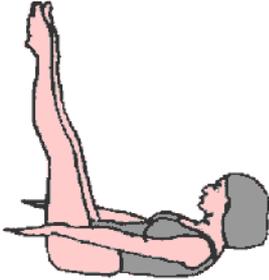
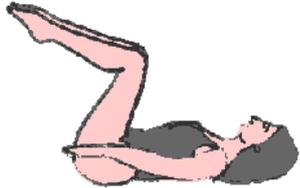
<p>(11) Pelvic Clock</p> <p>Setup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zip! • Imagine a clock sitting over your lower abdomen! <p>This exercise teaches awareness of positioning of the lower spine. If you can find this position when bending over or lifting, your back is (more or less) safe.</p>	<p>Tilt pelvis so that 12 o'clock rises to the ceiling.</p>  <p>Tilt pelvis so that 6 o'clock rises to the ceiling.</p>  <p>Return to the mid point of this range of movement. This is pelvic and spinal neutral.</p>	<p>Repetitions: Three times</p>
		

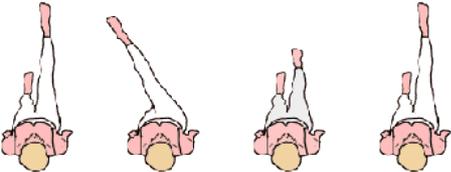
<p>(12) Heel slides –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zip and maintain a neutral pelvis! • exhale leg away, inhale leg back in. • *5 each leg. <p>Note how the hands can be used to monitor a neutral spine by checking that the pelvis does not move.</p>		<p>Repetitions: Three each leg!</p>
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<p>(13) Knee raises –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zip and maintain a neutral pelvis! • Keep knee bent at ninety degrees throughout. <p>Inhale up, exhale out.</p>		<p>Repetitions: Three each leg!</p>
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Working with the spine conforming to the mat

<p>Setup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiggle your shoulders and lengthen your spine • Wiggle your head and lengthen your spine. • Zip your lower abdomen. <p>Your back is now conforming to the mat. This is a good position for the dynamic exercises that follow!</p>	
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<p>(14) The Hundred</p> <p>Start from relaxation position: (Let the small of your back press into the mat)</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zip, chin to chest, look to the navel. 2. Knees to chest and lengthen the legs to ceiling. 3. Raise long arms and pump! <p>100 hundred pumps is fantastic, but even ten is a great start.</p>	<p>Ideal position for the beginner with reasonable neck strength. Soften the knees unless told otherwise.</p> 	<p>Modification for a weak neck (the ideal is to use a pillow, and to attempt to chin tuck and lift 30% of the head's weight).</p> 
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<p>(15) Single Leg Circles</p> <p>Setup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press your arms, head and back into the mat, and bring one leg (toes pointed) to the vertical. • Maintain a motionless pelvis at all times. <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint circles with your big toe! • Five starting across the body, then down around and up • Five in the reverse direction. 	<p>(15A) Paint the Ceiling! (Hamstring Stretches)</p> <p>Setup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for single leg circles, but this time the hands are clasped around the top of the thigh. <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your foot is a 4 inch paint brush! – paint the ceiling! • At the top of the stroke, pull the knee toward the shoulder, and attempt to touch big toe to forehead! <p>Move rhythmically, and exhale into the actual stretch. Repetitions: 5-8 each side Alternative: Hold for two or three breathes, release slowly, and then continue with rhythmic movement.</p> 
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(16) Single Leg Stretch (*)

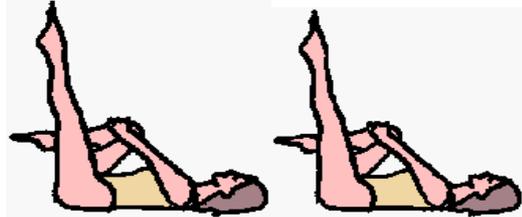
(Let the small of your back press into the mat)

1. Zip, chin to chest, look to navel.
2. Knees to chest and grasp the right knee & shin as shown.



Repetitions: 8-10 each side (total of 16 to 20 switches).

Modification for a weak neck (the ideal is to use a pillow, and to attempt to chin tuck and lift 30% of the head's weight).



(17) Criss cross

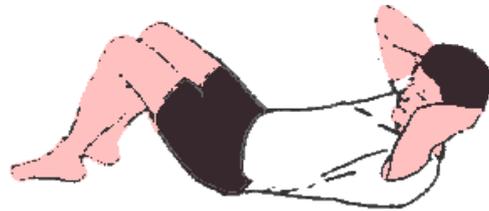
(arms only)*

Setup:

Lie on your back with knees at ninety degrees, and stack your hands behind your head. Keep the elbows wide as you curl upward and look to your navel - tips of the shoulder blades just off the mat.

Action:

1. Criss to the left and look behind.
2. Cross to the right and look behind.



Repetitions: 8-10 each side (total of 16 to 20 switches).

(18) Roll Down, with easy return to sitting (3ES)

Setup and Action:

Follow the sequence of pictures.
Repeat three times each side.

Repetitions: 3-5 each side



(19) Pelvic Curl up

Setup:

- Lie on your back with knees bent.
- Zip, clench, the buttocks.

Action:

- Slowly lift the tail bone between the legs, then peel the spine off the mat bone by bone.
- Reverse the movement - replace each vertebra one at a time down to the mat.



Precision:

Make "at least 2 inches" between each vertebra!

Repetitions: 3-5

(20) Mermaid Stretch

(First do the hip stretch pictured lower right).

SET UP: As in picture. The shin bones form two sides of a square.

ACTION:

1. Reach your left arm to the ceiling and over. Right hand hovers 6 inches above the mat.
2. Lower to the side with elbow directly under shoulder, palm down.
3. Inhale deeply and reach to the wall.

PRECISION:

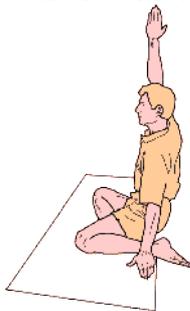
Scoop the abdominals.

When reaching up and over, look down to a point in front of your front shins, and increase the stretch in the side back. Do the same when you reach to the wall.

Easier version: - Straighten the left leg and put it out in front. If you need to, hold onto your right foot for support when reaching to ceiling and over.

REPS: 3-4 with legs to left, then 3-4 with legs to right

Start Position:



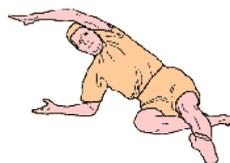
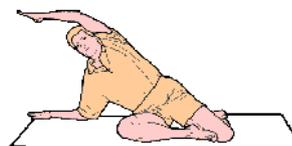
To Ceiling and Over -



Easier Version



To the Wall:



Hip Joint stretch: (push the upper thigh downward)



De-Stress!

(1) Upper back stretch

1. Hug a tree!
2. Hang the head.
3. Breathe into side off ribs and upper back.

(2) Chest Stretch

1. Sit back on heels
2. Arms behind and interlock fingers
3. Take hands backward and up.
4. Breathe into side off ribs and upper back.
5. 2% chin tuck.

Alternative: To avoid knee strain, do it standing.



(3) Sir Galahad

Start Position

1. Kneel with right leg backward and left leg forward.
2. Tuck the back-foot toes below the heel.
3. Place one hand on the knee and the other hand parallel with it.

Action 1

1. Gently zip!
2. The pelvis is a bucket. Tip water out of the back of the bucket!
3. Bring a vertical torso forward!

Action 2

The free hand reaches high

1. Gently zip!
2. Tip water out of the back of the bucket!
3. Bring a vertical torso forward!

Action 3

(Place both hands against the bottom of the breastbone, and gently push it backward and upward, then tuck your chin and round forward over your hands).

1. Gently zip!
2. Tip water out of the back of the bucket!
3. Bring a vertical torso forward!



Watch Points

1. The torso remains vertical at all times, even for action 3.

Alternatives

1. Sore knee: place a cushion under the knee.
2. Poor balance: use the wall or a chair for support.

What this exercise does

Stretches the hip flexors:

Rectus femoris, Iliacus, and the entire length of the Psoas

Benefits

Absolutely necessary antidote to the shortening and trigger point effects of chair sitting, running, and the intense hip flexor workout that is part of the Pilates mat work. Keeps hip arthritis at bay! No other hip flexor stretch does it better!

(4) Starting Blocks Down And Up

Start Position

1. Knee with one leg forward and one leg back
2. Place the hands either side of the front foot, and lengthen the back leg to the wall behind.
3. Drape the front arm pit over the front of the thigh.

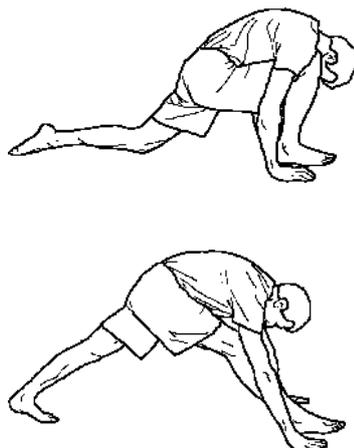
Action 1

1. Lengthen the spine, and ease the body forward until you feel a stretch on the inside thigh of the forward leg.

Action 2

1. Zip!
2. Straighten both legs, and let the pelvis come high.
3. Relax the back ankle and sink the heel toward the mat.

One to 5 breathes each side.



Benefits

It's quite possible to work around tight hamstrings, and still be effective when running and for other day to day movement patterns – you just learn to bend your knees more, or work with a rounded back. The torn hamstring and lower back problems come when you attempt to save yourself when the foot slips, or stretch out for sprinting, or at the end of a marathon when the hamstrings are cramping up. Effective stretching will help you monitor the status of your hamstrings, and also protect them from damage

Alternatives

Action 2: If the stretch on the front leg is severe, just straighten the knee to the comfortable limit.

What this exercise does

Stretches and maintains the hamstrings

Action 1: The adductor magnus

Action 2: The Other hamstrings.

Picture: An elite Kenyan runner with a very tight Adductor magnus. Look for the tight line from the inside left knee to the inside trouser line.



(5) DOWN DOG

Start Position

The crawler position with knees directly under hips and hands directly over shoulders.

Tuck your toes under your heels.

Action

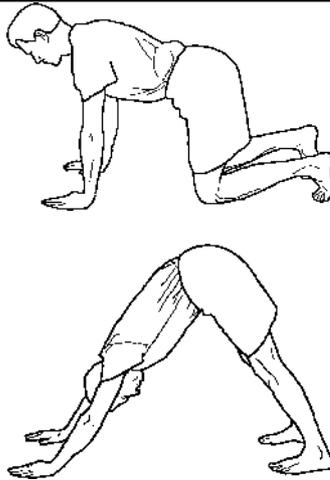
Zip!

Straighten your knees, and push your hips high. Keep the back of the neck long, and attempt to bring the head between the arms.

Relax your heels down to the mat.

Watch Points

Work towards forming a perfect pyramid shape.



Benefits

Try this stretch after a prolonged bout of sitting at your computer workstation:

1. Pumps the blood out of the calf muscles!
2. Wakes up the slumped shoulder girdle!

Pretty soon, you will have the whole office doing it.

Alternatives

Just work within your limits.

What this exercise does

1. Stretches the hamstrings.
 2. Stretches the Gastrocnemius.
 3. Stretches the connective tissues from the sole of the foot all the way up to the lower back.
 4. Stretches the Teres major (runs from the side of the shoulder blade to the upper arm bone).
 5. Wakes up the lazy Serratus anterior muscle.
- 3.

(6) Bent Church Steeple Walk (5ES)

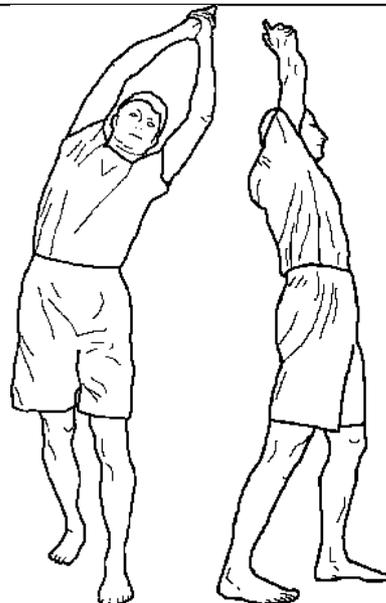
Clasp the hands with the first (index) fingers long to "form the point of a church steeple". Step forward, and with bent front knee, bend toward the side of the front leg.

Precision:

The pelvis looks forward.

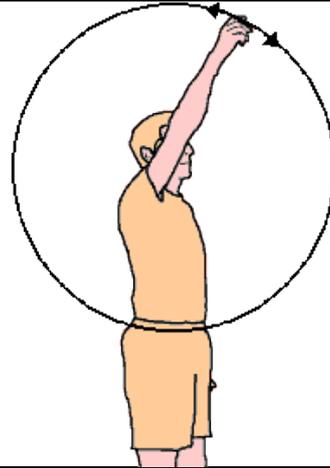
Bend and reach very high.

Breathe into the side of the abdomen to increase the stretch.



(7) Arm Circles (10 ES)

Mobilize the shoulder joint and to improve upper body posture.
Often people hold tension in the neck and across the top of the shoulders.
Arm circles re-educate the muscles to function in a better way
Lovely exercise to open out the upper body.
Left arm floats up and over.
(get a friend to move the arm via touch cueing the shoulder blade!)



Supplementary Stretches

This workout will be greatly enhanced if you also perform the stretches in the separate booklet "Stretches to Supplement Pilates Mat"

Appendix: Alternative for Backwards Kneeling:

Front Thigh Stretch

1. Gentle Zip!.
2. Leg and spine parallel with the floor and relaxed.
3. Low knee bent to ninety degrees.
4. Grasp the foot and slowly take the foot behind.
5. Pull on the ankle and clench the gluteal muscles to increase the stretch.
6. Relax all other parts.

