

Pilates Arc® User Guide

The Balanced Body® Pilates Arc® is lightweight Pilates equipment used to strengthen and tone your abdominals, stretch and strengthen your spine, and release tension while improving flexibility. It only weighs 4lbs and doesn't take up much space!

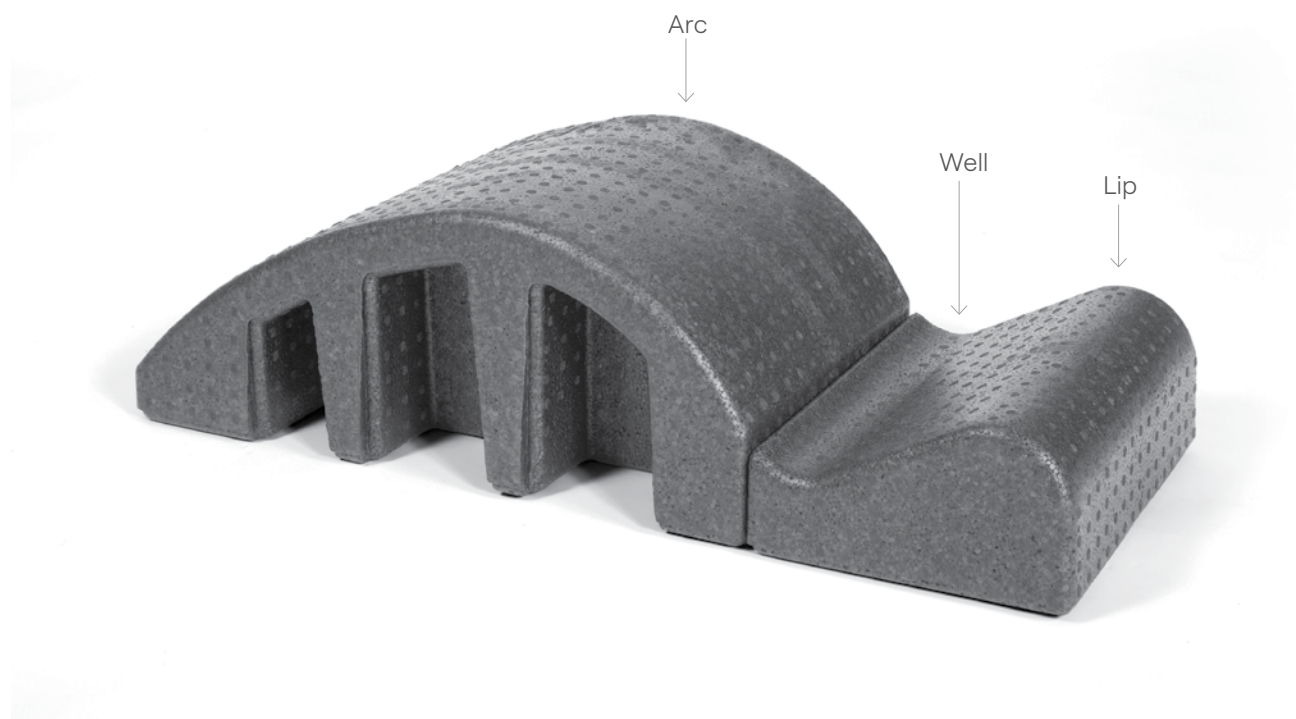
It is incredibly versatile – three exercise tools in one:

- Exercise Arc
- Classic Spine Corrector
- A wedge for your Reformer

If you are new to Pilates, the Pilates Arc is a great tool to help you discover the many benefits of the Pilates method.

If you are an experienced Pilates practitioner, it will help deepen your core and spine work and enhance your exercise experience.

This guide provides you with basic exercises to get started on the floor and Reformer, as well as safety tips. We hope you enjoy working with your new Balanced Body® Pilates Arc®!



Well Abdominal Series Preparation

Benefits

- Strengthen abdominals
- Strengthen back
- Stretch back
- Stretch shoulder and chest
- Stretch hip flexors
- Increase torso flexibility

Precautions

- **Neck problems:** support head in hands, limit range of motion in the Roll Down. Avoid the Reach exercise.
- **Back problems:** move carefully if you have trouble with flexing or extending your spine.
- Avoid with osteoporosis.

Starting Position

Sit in the well of the arc with knees bent, legs parallel and feet flat on the floor.

Modifications

For tall Clients: Sit closer to lip or use a pillow or box to pad your head as torso rolls back over arc.



Well Roll Down (10 Reps)

Starting Position

Place hands behind head with elbows wide and fingers lightly touching back of head. Keep elbows at edge of your peripheral vision.

Movement Sequence

- **Inhale:** engage abdominals and sit up tall.
- **Exhale:** draw abdominals deep into body until low back contacts arc. Roll back over the arc keeping abdominals engaged and low back touching arc.
- **Inhale:** take a sip of air and stretch torso.
- **Exhale:** engage abdominals, draw chin into chest, slide ribs down front of torso and roll off arc one vertebra at a time to return to starting position.

Imagery

- Narrow the pelvis and pull sit bones together to begin roll back. Imagine you have a drawstring around your pelvis and you are pulling the drawstring tight.
- Pull the belly button toward the spine. Suck abdominals deep into body.
- Peel your back off the arc one section at a time. Imagine your back is a pancake peeling off the arc.
- Keep elbows wide throughout. If you can see more than the very edge of your elbow, you have brought your arms in too far.
- Stretch the torso over the arc. Open the front of the body toward the ceiling.



1. Well Roll Down – Starting position.



2. Draw abdominals in until low back is on the arc.



3. Roll down until back is on arc.



4. Roll off arc to return to starting position.

Oblique Well Roll Down (10 Reps)

Starting Position

Same as for Well Roll Down.

Movement Sequence

- **Inhale:** engage abdominals and sit up tall.
- **Exhale:** draw abdominals deep into body until low back contacts arc.
- **Inhale:** Roll back over arc keeping abdominals engaged and low back touching arc.
- **Exhale:** roll upper back off arc and rotate to one side.
- **Inhale:** return to center with upper back off arc.
- **Exhale:** rotate to other side.
- **Exhale:** roll up to return to starting position.



1. Oblique Roll Down – Starting position.



2. Draw abdominals in and roll down until low back is on arc.



3. Stretch over arc.



4. Rotate torso to one side.



5. Return to center.



6. Rotate to other side.

SAMPLE EXERCISES

Reach (10 Reps)

Starting Position

Reach arms forward with knees bent and legs parallel.

Movement Sequence

- **Inhale:** engage abdominals and sit up tall.
- **Exhale:** draw abdominals deep into body until low back contacts arc. Roll back over arc keeping abdominals engaged, straighten legs and lift the hips out of the well as arms raise overhead.
- **Inhale:** circle arms out to side and stretch chest.
- **Exhale:** continue to circle arms forward, engage abdominals, draw chin into chest, and roll torso up off arc as knees bend.
- **Inhale:** return to starting position.



1. Reach – Starting position.



2. Roll down until low back is on arc.



3. Extend legs and reach arms overhead as torso leans over arc.



4. Open arms out to sides.



5. Roll upper body off arc as arms sweep down and forward.



6. Reach arms forward as upper body rolls off arc to return to starting position

Side Series Preparation

Benefits

- Strengthen oblique abdominals.
- Strengthen back.
- Stretch lateral torso.

Starting Position

Sit in well facing sideways. Bend bottom knee keeping foot on floor and reach top leg over hip with knee straight. Line top leg up with torso.

Precautions

- **Neck problems:** avoid or support head with bottom arm.
- **Back and sacroiliac joint problems:** be careful if you cannot tolerate lateral flexion.
- Avoid with osteoporosis.



Side Stretch – Mermaid (6-10 Reps)

Starting Position

Reach both arms to the side at shoulder height, overhead for a more difficult version or place bottom hand under head with elbow forward for head support.

Movement Sequence

- **Inhale:** sit up tall.
- **Exhale:** lean over curve of arc.
- **Inhale:** stretch the ribs.
- **Exhale:** engage side of torso and slide ribs toward hips to peel torso off arc and return to starting position.

Imagery

- Maximize stretch by breathing into top ribs while stretching. Imagine your rib cage is an accordion.
- To help lift torso, imagine someone is pulling top leg as torso peels off arc and returns to starting position.
- Support your head with the bottom hand if needed.



1. Starting position – Side Stretch.



2. Side Stretch, arms overhead – Lower torso onto arc and bring both arms overhead.



3. Side Stretch, head supported – Support head with bottom arm and lower torso onto arc.



4. Return to starting position.

Side Sit Ups with Rotation (6-10 Reps)

Starting Position

Place hands behind head with elbows wide. For an easier version, reach both arms to the side at shoulder height.

Movement Sequence

- **Inhale:** shift ribs toward arc.
- **Exhale:** lean over arc to stretch side of torso.
- **Inhale:** straighten torso until body is in one line from head to toe.
- **Exhale:** rotate torso toward floor.
- **Inhale:** rotate torso slightly toward ceiling.
- **Exhale:** rotate torso back to side position. Engage side body and lift torso up to starting position.
- **Inhale:** reverse stretch bending torso toward top leg, reaching top arm to ceiling and bottom arm to bottom leg.
- **Exhale:** return to starting position.



1. Starting position - Side Sit Ups with Rotation.



2. Lean torso towards arc.



3. Stretch over arc.



4. Rotate torso towards floor.

SAMPLE EXERCISES



5. Rotate torso back to side.



6. Rotate torso towards ceiling.



7. Return to starting position.



8. Reverse stretch bending torso toward top leg, reaching top arm to ceiling and bottom arm to bottom leg.

Leg Series Preparation

Benefits

- Strengthen inner thighs.
- Strengthen hip flexors.
- Stretch inner thighs, hamstrings, and hip flexors.

Precautions

- **Neck problems:** pad upper back to keep pressure off neck or avoid.
- Avoid with osteoporosis.

Starting Position

To get into starting position, sit on top of arc and hold arc's sides. Using abdominals, slowly roll back over arc until shoulders and head are on mat. Shorter users may need to pad the mat to support their head. Hips should be firmly supported by arc and there should be no pressure on neck.

Arc Dismounts

To get off arc, push it out from under hips and roll to one side.



SAMPLE EXERCISES

Scissors, Bicycle, Circles (4-10 Reps)

Scissors: Movement Sequence

Alternately lower one leg toward floor as other leg lifts toward head. Move smoothly and steadily between positions. Legs can be parallel, turned out or turned in.



Bicycle: Movement Sequence

Move legs in a bicycling motion. Focus on opening hips as much as possible. Bicycle legs in both directions.



Circles: Movement Sequence

Begin with both legs together. Open legs out and circle them down until they come together. Lift legs up to return to starting position. Circle in each direction. Circles can be large or small and legs can be parallel, turned out or turned in.



Imagery

- Keep weight off neck.
- Use shoulder blades and upper back for support, not neck.
- Don't rock and roll hips. Keep them balanced on top of arc.
- Reach legs as far as is comfortable. Imagine your legs are being pulled away from your center.
- Imagine drawing lines on the ceiling with your toes.

Teaser Preparation

Benefits

- Strengthen abdominals.
- Stretch hip flexors.
- Stretch spine.

Starting Position

Sit between well and lip of arc with back against arc and legs straight.

Modifications

Knees bent: if you have tight hamstrings or a weak lower back, keep knees bent throughout exercise.

Precautions

- **Low back problems:** keep low back against arc or avoid.
- Avoid with osteoporosis.



1. Starting position - knees bent.



1. Starting position - legs straight

Teaser (3-5 Reps)

Movement Sequence #1

- **Exhale:** lift legs off lip and reach hands toward feet to come into Teaser position.
- **Inhale:** lower both legs.
- **Exhale:** lift both legs back up to Teaser position.
- Repeat leg lowering and lifting 4 times.

Movement Sequence #2

- **Inhale:** roll torso back over arc, keeping legs high and reaching arms overhead.
- **Exhale:** draw chin to chest and roll torso up off arc as arms reach forward to return to Teaser position.
- Repeat torso roll down and up 4 times.

Movement Sequence #3

- **Inhale:** lower legs and roll torso over arc as arms reach overhead.
- **Exhale:** circle arms around as legs lift, chin draws into chest, and torso rolls up off arc into Teaser position.
- Repeat lowering and lifting of torso and legs 2 times.

Imagery

- Keep low back in neutral when in Teaser position. Feel equal effort on front and back of torso.
- Find the perfect balance point between sit bones and tailbone. Imagine hips are rooted while head and feet are suspended from ceiling.
- Let the weight of your legs sink femurs into hips to stabilize legs.
- Move smoothly from one position to the next. Momentum makes it easy, moving with slow precision makes it much harder.



1. Starting position – hips in well with legs straight.



2. Teaser #1 – Lower legs toward floor.



3. Teaser #2 – Roll torso over arc.

Swan Preparation

Benefits

- Strengthen back and hip extensors

Starting Position

On top of arc: Lie on top of arc, facing step with weight balanced between upper and lower body. Place hands on lip to begin.

On bottom of arc: Turn arc over and lie prone with shallow slope facing forward. Place hands on floor under shoulders.

Precautions

- **Low back problems:** must tolerate extension or avoid.
- **Wrist, elbow, and shoulder problems:** limit number of repetitions or avoid.

Imagery

- Keep abdominals engaged throughout. No sagging stomachs.
- Keep back body in one smooth bow throughout exercise. Imagine you are a rocking horse rocker. Keep the legs reaching up.
- Keep shoulders down and wide and neck long throughout.
- Engage back, gluteals and hamstrings while keeping torso long and without compressing lower back.



Swan (3-5 Reps)

Movement Sequence #1 – Top of Arc

- **Inhale:** use hands to press up into a long back extension. Keep abdominals engaged.
- **Exhale:** bend elbows to lower torso toward floor without changing the shape of the back extension (legs will lift).
- **Inhale:** straighten elbows to return to starting position.



1. Starting position.



2. Bend elbows and lower torso toward the floor.



3. Straighten elbows.

Movement Sequence #2 – Bottom of Arc

- **Inhale:** use hands to press up into a long back extension.
- **Exhale:** bend elbows and rock forward on arc without changing the shape of the back.
- For a challenge, lift arms off floor at top of extension and return hands to floor to catch torso as it rocks forward.



1. Starting position.



2. Straighten elbows to press up into a long back extension



3. Bend elbows and rock forward.

Bridge

Benefits

- Strengthen hip extensors (including hamstrings and gluteals)
- Improve pelvic stability

Starting Position

Lie supine with back on mat and low slope of arc against bottom of hips. Place both feet on arc.

Modification

Flat back: to decrease lumbar flexion and increase gluteal and hamstring engagement, press hips up toward ceiling with a flat back rather than rounding the spine to roll up.

Precautions

- **Neck problems:** pad upper back to keep pressure off neck or avoid.
- **Low back problems:** must tolerate extension otherwise avoid.
- Avoid with osteoporosis.

Imagery

- Keep shoulder blades and upper back on mat to keep weight off neck.
- Press hips up toward ceiling smoothly and evenly.
- Keep hips level and even throughout each exercise.



Bridge (3-5 Reps)

Movement Sequence – Bridge

- **Exhale:** draw abdominals in, engage gluteals and hamstrings, and roll hips and spine off mat. Don't roll any higher than top of shoulder blades.
- **Inhale:** hold hips steady.
- **Exhale:** roll back down onto mat to return to starting position.



1. Bridge – Starting position.



2. Press hips up toward ceiling.

Movement Sequence – Bridge with Marching

From bridge position, lift one foot off arc keeping hips steady. Free leg can be bent or straight. Alternate legs.



1. Bridge with Marching – Lift one foot off arc.



2. Lift other foot off arc.

SAMPLE EXERCISES

Movement Sequence – Shoulder Bridge

Lift one foot off arc and straighten leg toward ceiling with a pointed foot. Flex foot and lower leg toward arc then lift leg back up toward ceiling. Lift and lower leg 3X. Bend knee and place foot back on arc. Alternate sides.



1. Lift one leg up toward ceiling.



2. Flex foot and lower it toward arc.



3. Lift leg back up toward ceiling.

Abdominal Series on Reformer

Backstroke (6 reps)

Benefits

- Strengthen abdominals
- Strengthen shoulders
- Strengthen adductors
- Improve pelvic stability

Equipment Setup

- Place arc on Reformer with center arch over shoulder rests.
- Spring resistance: light – 1 blue to 1 red and 1 blue.
- Strap length is regular.

Starting Position

Sit on arc step with back against arc and hold straps in hands with elbows bent.

Movement Sequence

- **Inhale:** reach arms and legs toward ceiling.
- **Exhale:** open legs and arms and circle them around to come into the Hundred position.
- **Exhale:** bend knees into chest and return arms to starting position.

Precautions

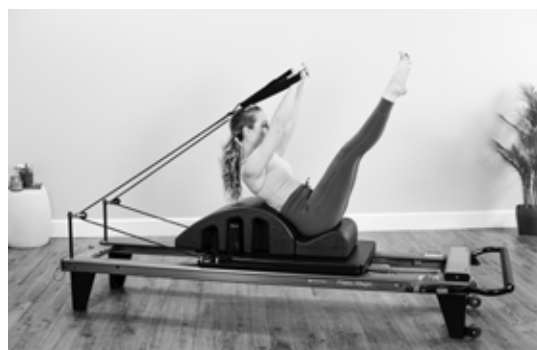
- **Shoulder problems:** decrease resistance and don't raise arms above shoulder height.
- **Low back problems:** maintain contact with arc to stabilize lower back.
- Avoid with osteoporosis.

Imagery

- Maintain contact of lower back on arc.
- Move smoothly from one position to next.
- Nod chin toward chest to maintain comfortable head position.



1. Backstroke – Starting position.



2. Reach arms and legs toward ceiling.



3. Circle arms and legs out and around to come into the Hundred position.

Abdominal Series on Reformer

Single Leg Stretch (6-10 Reps each side)

Starting Position

Sit on arc step with back against arc and hold straps in hands with elbows straight and knees bent.

Movement Sequence

- **Exhale and inhale:** maintain position of torso and arms as legs alternately bend and straighten.



1. Single Leg Stretch - Reach torso towards feet as one leg bends in and other leg reaches out.

Single Straight Leg Stretch (6-10 Reps each side)

Starting Position

Sit on arc step with back against arc and hold straps in hands with elbows and legs straight. Begin with one leg up and one leg down.

Movement Sequence

- **Exhale and inhale:** maintain position of torso and arms as legs alternately raise and lower.



2. Single Straight Leg Stretch - Reach the torso towards the feet as the leg lifts.

Side Lying Leg Work (10 Reps each)

Benefits

- Strengthen abductors, adductors, and hamstrings
- Improve strength of hip, knee, and ankle
- Improve pelvic stability

Equipment Setup

- Place arc on Reformer with center arch over shoulder rests.
- Spring resistance: medium to heavy – 2 red to 3 red and 1 blue.
- Footbar is in high position.

Starting Position – Foot in Back

Sit sideways in arc with bottom knee bent and torso supported by arc. Support head with hands. Place top leg on footbar in parallel with toes level with back end of footbar padding to create a right angle at knee joint.

Starting Position – Foot in Front (no photos)

Place top leg on footbar in parallel with toes level with front end of footbar padding to create a right angle at hip joint.

Movement Sequence

- **Exhale:** Press footbar away keeping leg parallel to floor.
- **Inhale:** Bend knee and return to starting position.

Precautions

- **Knee problems:** decrease resistance, minimize range of motion and use starting position with foot on front edge of footbar.

Imagery

- Keep moving leg parallel to floor.
- Maintain alignment of hips and lower back as leg straightens. Avoid rocking forward or back.



1. Side Lying Legs Parallel – Starting position.



2. Straighten the leg and press the carriage back.

