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INTRODUCTION TO THE PILATES ARC®

The Pilates Arc®

The Pilates Arc is based on the Step Barrel, or Spine Corrector designed by Joseph Pilates, to increase the strength of the core and the flexibility of the spine. The Pilates Arc is a lightweight, portable and inexpensive version of the original Step Barrel, making the wonderful exercises on this piece of equipment available to more people than ever before. The removable step, asymmetrical curve and ability to work on the top or the bottom of the arc means you can add exciting exercises into your classes or personal training sessions.

THE ANATOMY OF THE PILATES ARC®

The Pilates Arc consists of

- A rounded surface called the arc or barrel that has an asymmetrical curve.
  - A more gentle curve on the low slope side
  - A sharper curve on the high slope side.
  - You can choose how much stretch or how much challenge you get by which side of the arc you use.

- A triangular piece called the step that can be detached from the Arc.
  - The high point of the triangular piece is called the step.
  - The low point where it meets the arc is called the well.
  - When sitting on the Pilates Arc, you might sit on the step, on the slope of the step or in the well.

- The side of the arc has several ribs which can be used as handles.
- The bottom of the arc has several ribs which can be used as handles when the arc is upside down.
  - The ribs that go from front to back are called the long ribs.
  - The short ribs that stick out of the sides of the long ribs are called the cross ribs.

ADJUSTING THE PILATES ARC®

When Joseph Pilates designed the original Step Barrel, he customized the shape of the Barrel to the size and flexibility of the individual client.

- Because the Pilates Arc has an asymmetrical curve and removable step, you can adjust the exercise by choosing which end of the arc to work on.
- If you are particularly tall or short, you can adjust the fit of the arc using towels or sticky pads to support the head, the shoulders or the low back.
- If the Pilates Arc is too slippery or too firm, you can place a sticky pad or an exercise mat over the surface for comfort.
- In order keep the Pilates Arc from slipping and to pad the upper body when lying over the arc, place the arc on an exercise mat.
SINGLE LEG STRETCH
BEGINNING | 10 REPS

STARTING POSITION
Sit between the well and the step of the Pilates Arc® with the back against the arc and the knees bent with the feet off the floor. Place the left hand on the inside of the right knee and the right hand on the outside of the right ankle and straighten the left leg. Keep the elbows wide and hold the leg at a height that allows the low back to remain stable. Keep the head up. Depending on the length of the torso and where you need support, your hips may be close to the step or down the slope toward the well.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE
**Exhale** – Release the leg held into the chest, straighten it out below you and pull the other leg in by placing the right hand on the inside of the left knee and the left hand on the outside of the left ankle. Pull the abdominals in as you bring the leg in. Keep the elbows wide and the back steady.

**Inhale** – Switch legs.

CHALLENGE
**Hands free**
To challenge the abdominals, draw the leg in only until it forms a right angle with the hip and reach the arms toward the feet rather than pulling the knee in.

CUEING AND IMAGERY
› Keep the shoulders down and the elbows wide.
› Keep your torso still.
› Imagine you are holding a glass of your favorite beverage on your abdomen and don’t spill it.
› Pull the abdominals deeper in with every repetition.
› Don’t let the abdominals rise!

PURPOSE
› Develop pelvic stability and core control
› Strengthen the abdominals

PRECAUTIONS
**For neck and shoulder injuries:** Support the head with the hands.

**For low back injuries:** Be sure to keep your low back stable throughout the exercise. Avoid if it is uncomfortable.

Avoid with osteoporosis.
STARTING POSITION

Place the hands on the Pilates Arc® either right side up or upside down. Straighten out the torso until you are in a solid plank position with the shoulders over the wrists, the inner thighs together and the torso in one line from head to feet.

Arc Right Side Up
Place the hands on the step or on the top of the arc. The higher the shoulders are over the hips, the easier the exercise is, so if the hands are on the top of the arc, it is easier than with the hands on the step, which is a little easier than if the hands are on the ground.

Arc Upside Down
With the Pilates Arc® upside down, the arc becomes an unstable surface, requiring more scapular stability in the plank or push up position. This is generally harder than with the arc right side up.

Take the step off the Pilates Arc® and turn the arc over so the round side is on the floor. The shape of the arc provides different challenges depending on where you place your hands. Hand positions include:

- Arc long ways, low slope towards you: Place the hands on the cross ribs that are closest to you for the most stability. Place your hands on the long ribs in the middle of the arc for less stability.
- Arc long ways, high slope towards you: Place the hands on the cross ribs that are closest to you for a moderate amount of mobility.
- Arc crossways: Place the hands on the long ribs towards the ends of the arc. This position creates an asymmetrical curve that will challenge each arm differently, so be sure to do the exercises with the arc facing in both directions.
LEG SERIES ON THE ARC
BEGINNING | 4-10 REPS

STARTING POSITION

With the Pilates Arc® you can use either the low slope or the high slope for these exercises. Take the step off to use the high slope. The low slope is gentler and puts less pressure on the neck. The high slope is more advanced and more challenging for the neck and the back flexibility.

To get into the starting position, sit on top of the arc or in the well, hang onto the handles and, using the abdominals, slowly roll back off the arc until the shoulders and head are on the mat.

Another way to get into the starting position that works well for taller and stronger clients: Lie on your back with your butt at the low slope end of the arc and your hands on the handles. Reach the legs up to the ceiling and roll up into the Roll Over position from the Mat. Pull the Pilates Arc towards you until it contacts the low back. Lower the hips onto the arc.

If you are short, pad the mat at the end of the arc to support the head. The hips should be firmly supported by the arc and there should be no pressure on the neck.

Scissors

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

› Alternately extend one leg to the floor as the other leg lifts up toward your head.

› The breathing pattern can be one inhale and one exhale for every complete set or one inhale per set.
Bicycle

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- Move the legs in a bicycling motion, focusing on opening up the hips as much as possible. Bicycle the legs in both directions.

1. Bicycle - Split the legs

2. Bend one knee and reach the foot toward the step

3. Bring the bent knee in to the chest as the other leg reaches toward the step

4. Straighten the bent knee and reach the other out to begin on the second side

Bookends

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- Begin with both legs up toward the ceiling with the knees straight. Open the legs out to the side and close the legs.

1. Bookends - Starting Position

2. Open the legs