

# INTRODUCTION TO PILATES MATWORK TEACHER TRAINING COURSE



*“Contrology is designed to give you suppleness, natural grace, and skill that will be unmistakably reflected in the way you walk, in the way you play, and in the way you work.”*

**Joseph Pilates**

# WHAT IS PILATES?

Pilates is an extremely safe, functional and effective exercise programme. It focuses on the core postural muscles which help keep the spine correctly aligned as well as working on the strength, mobility and flexibility of the whole body. It was developed by Joseph Pilates at the beginning of the 1900's. Joseph Pilates was born in Germany in the early 1880's and throughout his childhood, he was plagued by ill health. To make himself physically stronger, he took up body-building and various other sports, including gymnastics and diving. He later moved to England, but when World War I broke out he was interned on the Isle of Man. Whilst working as a hospital orderly, he came into contact with many war casualties and it was then that he started to develop his Pilates system as a way of helping them. He believed that imbalances in the body and habitual patterns of movement cause injuries. He saw the links between weak areas of the body and overcompensation by other parts of the body, so he set about creating a programme based on re-education and realignment. He moved to New York in 1926 and set up an exercise studio and Pilates soon became a favourite form of exercise for dancers and athletes.



In recent years it has become one of the most popular forms of exercise, not only improving the shape of the body and posture, but for a whole host of other health benefits too. It is recommended by doctors and back care specialists as a form of rehab following back problems as well as a way of preventing them. Sportsmen are using this system of exercise more and more as a means of improving their core strength and balance. The Pilates philosophy is all about training the mind and body working together towards the goal of overall fitness. It is all about quality, not quantity

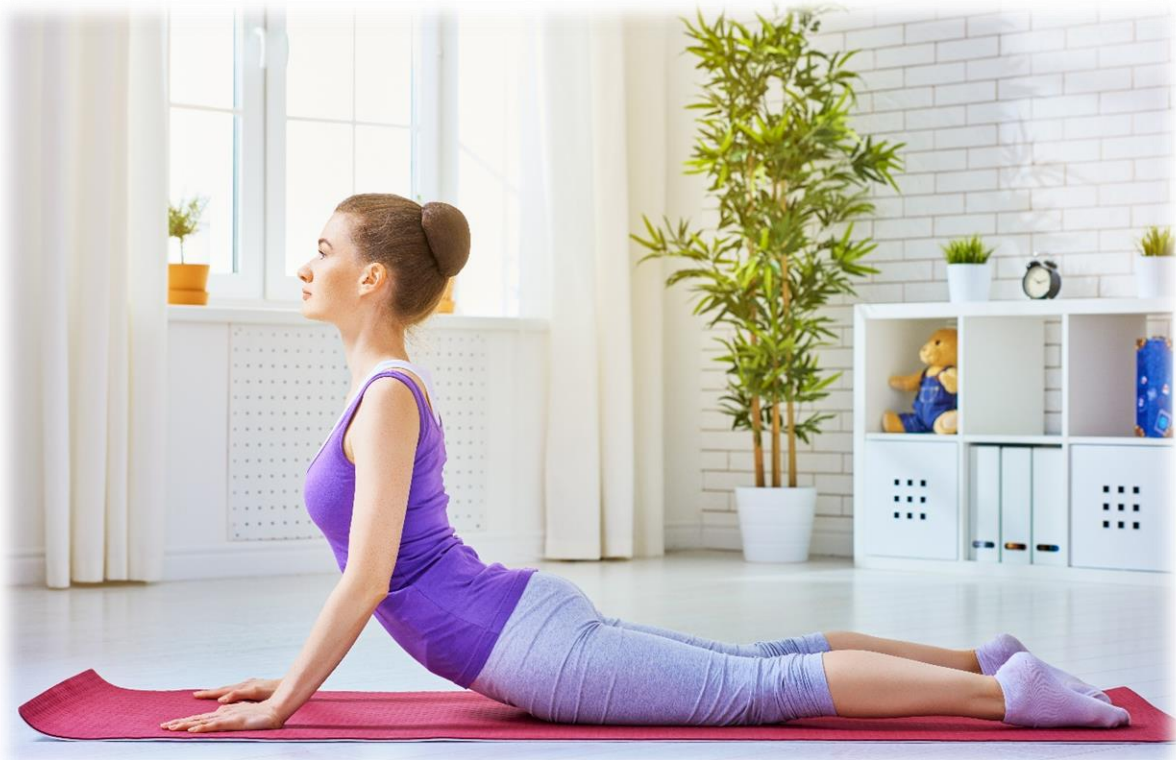
# DIFFERENT TYPES OF PILATES

Pilates, originally known as Contrology, is a series of exercises performed in a sequence on a mat. The Apparatus was designed to help people master the Matwork, especially useful for rehabilitation.

## Matwork

*“A few well-designed movements, properly performed in a balanced sequence, are worth hours of doing sloppy calisthenics or forced contortion.”*

There are basically 34 Matwork exercises (and countless modifications) and each exercise prepares the body for the next. Every part of the body is worked, including the feet, although people think of Pilates as primarily working the core. The exercises are a combination of strength, flexibility and mobility, designed to correct posture which will help prevent back problems, injuries and improve your health. To really get the full benefits, Pilates needs to be practiced using the 8 Principles with total engagement of the mind.



*“The Pilates Method of Body Conditioning is complete coordination of body, mind and spirit.”*

## Matwork Equipment

There are some small, portable pieces of equipment which can be very useful tools on the mat. They can help modify or increase the intensity of an exercise. Some examples are the stability ball, foam roller, Pilates circle and resistance bands.



## Apparatus

There are several pieces of apparatus. Probably the best known piece of equipment is the Reformer which resembles a bed with pulleys and springs. The Cadillac, Spine Corrector Barrel, Wunda Chair, High Chair, Ladder Barrel and the Ped -o-Pull are all apparatus you could expect to see in a Pilates studio. Unlike Matwork, there are hundreds of different exercises you can perform on the Apparatus, all of which will enable you eventually to perform the Matwork sequence perfectly.

## Matwork or Apparatus?

For some, it comes down to personal preference. As a complete beginner, a course of private classes on the Apparatus will really set you up for Matwork. Those with little body awareness or injuries will also benefit from using the Apparatus. The ultimate benefit of mastering the Mat is that you can do it anytime, anywhere, without being tied to a studio. There is wonderful flow to Matwork that you can't get from the Apparatus.

*“A man is as young as his spinal column.”*

# 10 BENEFITS OF PILATES

I watched, mesmerized, as Sylvie Guillem danced in “Push” at the Emirates Palace, with the mobility and flexibility of a child, despite being in her mid forties; clear proof that stretching daily will keep you young. Around 25 million people practice Pilates worldwide so what makes it so popular?



1. Your body will become better aligned to prevent imbalances and improve posture. This is particularly useful for sportsmen, for example: think of a tennis player constantly hitting the ball using the same arm or a golfer always swinging from the same side.
2. You will become more body-aware and better coordinated, improving your skills of proprioception - the sequencing of movement.
3. Your body will change shape for the better, giving you a longer, leaner, toned physique.
4. The space between your vertebrae will be increased which will minimise pressure on discs and nerves. There is no question that Pilates will prevent back problems or teach you to manage them.
5. You will build core and back strength to help support the spine and maintain good posture. Many of us have posture that is far from ideal, often the cause of many health issues, particularly back problems.
6. All muscles are worked on so that the whole body can work together rather than one area becoming overloaded.

7. The condition and strength of your pelvic floor will be greatly improved as the pelvic floor is part of the core, reducing incontinence problems. A huge problem and not just for women!
8. Flexibility and mobility will be substantially improved over time so that the body can move freely, without putting undue strain on the back.



9. Exercise increases the levels of serotonin and endorphins which promote feelings of wellbeing and meditation is now widely used as a way of dealing with depression. Yoga and Pilates are an excellent way to help you lead a happy, positive life.
10. You will learn how to breathe correctly and efficiently so that plenty of oxygen reaches every part of the body, especially the spine. Breathing relieves stress and can reduce high blood pressure as well as increasing energy.