

PILATES TERMINOLOGY

ALIGNMENT – keeping control of what should be moving and what should not!

BREATHING – in pilates we use Diaphragmatic, Lateral or Thoracic breathing : you should feel the back and the sides of the ribcage expand.

CENTRING – engaging the pelvic floor and deep abdominals.

CERVICAL SPINE – the upper spine, this is the neck area. Highly mobile.

CORE MUSCLES – pelvic floor, Transverse Abdominus, Multifidus. Zip up pelvic floor, hollow TA and scoop them back towards the spine to create a strong centre from which movement can take place.

CORE STABILITY – another way of saying pelvic stability AND/OR the combination of pelvic stability and scapular stability – ensuring the torso or the core of the body is strong and stable.

DON'T IMPRINT/PRESS YOUR LOWER BACK INTO THE FLOOR – another reminder during class to keep your neutral pelvis, not pressing the back into the mat to try and keep stable.

GIRDLE OF STRENGTH – Joseph Pilates used this term referring to the creation of core strength and scapular stability to protect the trunk and keep it stable.

HIP FLEXORS – muscles in the the crease of the thigh that allow you thigh bone to move. Can be overactive and tight if you spend a lot of time sitting! Can also try and help when you do Curl Ups- but shouldn't!

HOLLOW THE DEEP ABDOMINAL MUSCLES – as the pelvic floor lift arrives at the 2nd floor the lower fibres of the TA will contract, so allow it to hollow like a hammock.

KEEP THE NATURAL CURVE /NEUTRAL SPINE – a reminder during exercising that you are looking to maintain the natural curves in the spine during the movement.

KEEP THE PELVIS STABLE – reminding you to engage 'Centre' or zip and hollow to keep the pelvis as still as possible in its neutral position as you perform the exercise.

LUMBAR SPINE – the lower back area.

MOBILISING MUSCLES – muscles that move the skeleton. Generally big and near the surface of the skin. Tire quickly and can work between 40-100% of their full efficiency. Need time to recover after a workout.

MULTIFIDUS – tiny muscles in the spine which help stabilise your spine all the way up.

NAVEL TO SPINE – another way of saying Engage Centre or Zip and Hollow.

NEUTRAL PELVIS – pelvis in the neutral position, not tilting forward or backwards or leaning to one side. The pubic bone should be level with your hip bone.

NEUTRAL SPINE – having the natural curves in the spine, not allowing your bum to stick out or sagging in the middle and creating a hump in the upper spine.



PELVIC FLOOR - the pelvic floor muscles are activated by thinking of closing down the back passage (as if trying to stop passing wind) then bringing this activation forward and upward. You can imagine closing a lift door and then going from the basement to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor. Try not to squeeze your bottom muscles as these are a completely different set of muscles, but you will learn to isolate the PF muscles as you continue to practice. They should engage before the deep abdominals.

PELVIC STABILITY – keeping the pelvis still as you move other parts of the body. Or maintaining neutral pelvis using the core muscles as you move limbs.

POWERHOUSE – Joseph Pilates believed that if we developed our powerhouse then we create the strong centre from which the body can safely move. Inner thighs, deep abdominals, back muscles and pelvic floor cover this.

THORACIC SPINE – the mid back area of the spine. From below the neck to the end of the ribcage. Rotation occurs mainly throughout this whole area.

SCAPULAR STABILISATION - keeping the shoulder blades gently engaged towards the pelvis and to the back of the ribcage, rather than allowing them to hunch up and create tension in the upper back. Allows good shoulder and arm movement and keeps shoulder joint healthy and mobile.

SCAPULO HUMERAL RHYTHM – basically, allowing the arm to move first, then as the arm continues to elevate, allowing the shoulder blade to upwardly rotate, and then lastly the collar bone elevates. When the arm has moved to just below shoulder height it should be palm up. This also allows good shoulder and arm movement and keeps shoulder joint healthy and mobile.

SEGMENTAL CONTROL – ability to move the spine smoothly and sequentially vertebra by vertebra, rather than like a plank or an ironing board. Requires concentration!

SPINE CURLS – lift your bottom and not your head!

STABILISING MUSCLES – these are endurance muscles. Often deep within the body and small. Cannot work them to exhaustion because you cannot work them 100%

STANDING CORRECTLY – standing with neutral spine. Lengthen up and stand tall. Weight even through the feet, shoulders heavy and soft arms hanging by the side, head lengthening up, spine lengthening up, shoulders and shoulder blades relaxed.

TRANSVERSE ABDOMINUS – TA – the biggest and deepest abdominal muscle. It wraps all the way around the torso from just above the pubic bone to the bottom of the rib cage and supports the back, protects the abdominal organs and assists the diaphragm when you breathe out.