

PJ O'Clair's Fabulous Five
STOTT PILATES exercises to do every day
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1. AB Prep

Benefits: Mobilizes your upper spine and strengthens the abdominals, teaches how important shoulder girdle support is in lifting the head.

Start Position: Lying on your back with knees bent, feet hip distance apart, arms long by your sides. If you have a small ball, place that between your inner thighs.

Exercise and Breath Pattern:

Inhale to gently slide shoulder blades up toward your ears, Exhale, slide shoulder blades down feeling the under arm muscles, engage your abs (squeeze the ball if you have one) and lift your head and shoulders off the mat, be sure to bring your arms up level with your hips. Inhale to stay up, Exhale lower back down to the start position.

Repeat that 4 times in full range of motion. Then on the fourth repetition stay up and pulse 4 times with the breath – make sure the movement comes from the lower ribs not your neck.

Do this for 3 full sets

Beneficial thoughts:

- Remember the shoulder blade muscles support your neck, be sure to engage them when you are lifting your head off the mat
- On the exhalation, your abs engage, feel a gentle wrapping sensation around the torso like a corset
- The breath encourages activation of the abdominal wall to flatten and support. Use your hands to feel this connection of the abs when you exhale.

2. Side Leg Lifts

Benefits: Side lying exercises engage all four layers of the abdominal wall and work the side of your body which often gets neglected but is very beneficial.

Start Position: Side-lying on the mat with entire body in one long line, top hand on the mat like a kick stand

Exercise and Breath Pattern:

Inhale to prepare, exhale, contract the abdominals first then lift both legs up off the mat (together), Inhale to lower them back down
Repeat 5 – 10 times

Beneficial thoughts:

- Be sure the abdominal wall is flat before you lift your legs
- Don't think about lifting the legs until you feel completely connected – once you have succeeded with this lift the top arm up and see how much you can balance

3. Shoulder Bridge Prep

Benefits: Works the entire back side of your body, keeps the core strong

Start Position: Lying on your back with knees bent, feet hip distance apart, arms long by your sides. If you have a small ball, place that between your inner thighs.

Exercise and Breath Pattern:

Inhale to prepare, exhale, contract the abdominals especially at the lower ribcage, squeeze the ball if you have one, activate your glutes (butt) and lift your hips up, Inhale to stay up, Exhale to lower pelvis back to mat keeping spine straight, avoid rolling down.
Repeat 5 – 10 times

Beneficial thoughts:

- Allow the breath to initiate the movement – with the exhale bring the ribs flush to the body – remember the order of operations is key to executing proper movement
- on the last repetition roll the spine down to release it

4. Swan Dive Prep

Benefits: works the spine in extension which is very important for the health of the spine

Start Position: Face down on the mat with spine neutral, legs long, rotated outward (laterally) and shoulder-distance apart. Elbows bent with arms down on the mat – finger tips in line with the chin, tip of the nose on the mat (not forehead)

Exercise and Breath Pattern:

Inhale to start lift the head and shoulders off the mat, Exhale press thru hands and extend spine all the way off the mat as far as you can go without letting go of abdominal connection, if you have the strength and flexibility the hips will come up just be sure the pubic bone stays on the mat, Inhale bend the elbows to start lowering back down, maintain your spinal shape until the lower ribs touch down, Exhale to lengthen the entire spine back down to the start position
Repeat 5 – 10 times.

Beneficial thoughts:

- Think of lengthening your spine long to lift your head off the mat, visualize reaching your ears away from your shoulders
- Be sure the arms are not too narrow, that will make it hard for you to extend your spine upward
- Don't be afraid to move your spine this way – it's natural and very necessary for spinal health – we are so forward in life and we need to move our bodies the other way to maintain strength.

5. Leg Pull Front Prep

Benefits: Works the entire abdominal wall against gravity, strengthens the shoulder girdle, all core muscles and helps to encourage neutral spinal alignment

Start Position: on all fours hands and knees, with toes turned under, legs can be together or apart (a ball between the knees is always good here for additional support) hands directly under the shoulders, knees directly under the hips, all natural curves of the spine should be present with those sit bones SMILING ☺ - if you were in my class you know what means!

Exercise and Breath Pattern:

Inhale to prepare, Exhale to lift the knees one inch off the mat without shifting the body weight forward or back – just lift perfectly up, avoid

rounding the spine keep it perfectly neutral with all natural curves,
Inhale to stay up, Exhale to lower down to mat to start position
Repeat 5 – 10 times

Beneficial thoughts:

- This is a tiny movement be sure to lift knees just a tiny bit
- The sit bones when smiling should be wide and spread upward, you might feel like your are arching your back – but as long as you have your natural curve and feel your abs supporting you, you are fine
- Spread your fingers wide so your wrist is more open