

## Preparation (fundamental) exercises

1. Pelvic Clocks (Level 1)
2. Scarf Breathing (Level 1)
3. Four-Point Kneeling (Level 1)
4. Single and Double Knee Folds (Levels 1-3)
5. Arm Raises (Level 1)
6. Chicken Wings (Level 1)
7. Roll Over Preparation (Level 1)
8. Chin Tucks and the Cervical Nod (Level 1)
9. Abdominal Preparation (Level 1)
10. Saw Preparation (Level 1)
11. Side Twist Preparation (Level 1)
12. Swan Dive Preparation (Level 2)



**Aim**

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- to learn how to mobilise and align the pelvis

**Starting position**

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- semi-supine
- imagine that there is a clock face on the lower abdomen; the navel is 12 o'clock, the pubic bone 6 o'clock, the anterior superior iliac spines (asis) are 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock on either side
- visualise a marble in the middle of the clock face

Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

**Action**

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1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: tilt the pelvis posteriorly and visualise the marble rolling to 12 o'clock.



Continue to roll the marble around to 1 o'clock and so on, rotating the pelvis until arriving at 6 o'clock where the pelvis will be centred and anteriorly tilted.



3. Inhale: roll the marble around up to 7 o'clock and so on, rotating the pelvis until arriving in the centre once again, in a posterior tilt at 12 o'clock.

Repeat five times and then repeat five times in the opposite direction. Then return to neutral.

Teaching points:

## Scarf breathing

Level 1

A useful exercise for the preparation and closing phases of a session.

### Aim

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- to encourage lateral breathing

### Starting position

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- sitting, standing, semi-supine
- wrap a stretch-band around the lower ribs, crossing it over at the front
- hold the ends of the stretch-band, keeping the shoulders released and the arms relaxed



Engage the core muscles appropriately as you breathe.

### Action

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1. Inhale: be aware of the ribs expanding wide, feel the band gently expand.
2. Exhale: as the lungs begin to expel air allow the breastbone to soften. Gently pull the band as the lungs empty and allow the ribs to release with the final part of the expiration.

Repeat up to ten times.

Teaching points:

### Aim

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- to find neutral alignment of pelvis and spine in a four-point kneeling position
- to locate and connect the deep core muscles

### Starting position

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- kneel on all fours; hands directly beneath shoulders and knees directly beneath hips



### Action

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1. Inhale to prepare the body.
2. Exhale: posteriorly tilt the pelvis allowing the lumbar spine to slightly flex.



3. Inhale: lengthen the spine and anteriorly tilt the pelvis allowing the lumbar spine to slightly extend.



Repeat three times to help find the mid, neutral position of the pelvis in between these two extremes. Allow for the natural curvature of the lumbar spine.



### **Action**

Now that you have found the neutral position of the pelvis and the spine, we can learn to engage the deep core muscles.

Experiment by using alternative cues and methods to locate these muscles.

1. Inhale to prepare the body.
2. Exhale as you gently engage the pelvic floor and lower abdominals.

Breathe in and out for up to 5 breaths, keeping these core muscles gently engaged, before releasing.

**Teaching points:**

## Single knee folds

Level 1

### Aim

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- to mobilise the hip joints and challenge pelvic and spinal stability

### Starting position

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- semi-supine



Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

### Action

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1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: flex the left hip, folding the leg in towards the body. Keep the pelvis and spine still and stable.



3. Inhale: hold the position.
4. Exhale: return the leg back down to the starting position, keeping the stability of the pelvis and spine.

Repeat up to five times on each side.

### Teaching points:

**Aim**

- to mobilise the hip joint and challenge the stability of the pelvis and the spine

**Starting position**

- semi-supine



Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

**Action**

1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: flex the left hip, folding the leg in towards the body keeping the pelvis and spine still and stable.



3. Inhale: lightly clasp the knee with the left hand.



4. Exhale: flex the right hip, folding the leg in towards the body.





5. Inhale: lightly clasp the right knee with the right hand, releasing the left knee.
6. Exhale: lower the left leg to the starting position.
7. Inhale: maintain the position.
8. Exhale: return the right leg back down to the mat.

Repeat up to six times, alternating the starting leg.

Teaching points:

### Double knee folds

Level 2/3

*Follow the directions above but without holding the knees.*



Teaching points:

**Aim**

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- to encourage correct scapulohumeral rhythm

**Starting position**

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- standing (may also be done seated)

Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.



**Action**

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1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: lift the arm out to the side in a line slightly in front of the body. The humerus must move first and then as the arm rises further allow the scapula to glide smoothly around the ribcage.



3. Inhale: lower the arm on the same pathway and return to the side of the body.

Repeat three times, alternating arms.

Teaching points:

## Chicken wings

Level 1

### Aim

- to mobilise the shoulder girdle, encourage correct scapulohumeral rhythm and teach scapular stability

### Starting position

- semi-supine, arms lengthened down by your side, palms down



Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

### Action

- Inhale to prepare.
- Exhale: raise both arms overhead into shoulder flexion (within comfort zone and without disturbing position of the head, neck or spine), the palms will now be facing the ceiling. Keep the ribs connected.



- Inhale: bend both elbows and begin to draw the elbows in towards the sides of the body.



- Exhale: slide the arms back to a straightened position.

Repeat actions 3 and 4 five times before bringing the arms back to the starting position.

Teaching points:

## Roll over preparation

Level 1

### Aim

- to teach segmental control of the spine and pelvic stability through movement

### Starting position

- semi-supine, arms lengthened alongside the body, palms down



Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

### Action

1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: tilt the pelvis posteriorly and begin to roll the spine off the mat, one vertebra at a time. Wheel the spine up to the tips of the shoulder blades.



3. Inhale: hold the position; lengthening the spine and allowing the pelvis to be in a neutral position.
4. Exhale: wheel the spine back down onto the mat, again moving one vertebra at a time until the spine and pelvis are in neutral.

Repeat up to eight times.

Teaching points:

## Chin tucks and the cervical nod

Level 1

### Aim

- to teach the neutral position of the head and neck and cervical stability

### Starting position

- semi-supine (use a flat cushion or folded towel, if appropriate)



### Action

1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: keeping the head in contact with the mat, lengthen and flex the neck drawing the chin down.



3. Inhale: gently and smoothly, extend the neck within a comfortable range. Keep the back of the head in contact with the mat as the chin glides upwards.



Repeat this flexion/extension five times before finding the mid position, that is neither flexed nor extended. The face is directed towards the ceiling.



### The cervical nod

The nodding action described above will be the movement which initiates 'the cervical nod' and action used in many Pilates exercises (e.g. abdominal preparation, 'the hundred', single leg stretch, roll ups).

The cervical nod is the term used to describe the head flexing on the spine at C1 and then each cervical vertebrae flexing one at a time from C1 sequentially down to C7. This conscious initiation of the nod and then neck articulation is essential, otherwise cervical flexion will occur mainly at C7, creating an undesired hinge effect.



(Cervical nod going into abdominal prep and roll up)

<b>Teaching points:</b>
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### Aim

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- to mobilise the cervical and thoracic spine and strengthen the abdominals

### Starting position

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- semi - supine
- lightly clasp both hands behind the head, the elbows in your peripheral vision to ensure good placement of the scapulae



Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

### Action

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1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: start with a cervical nod and sequentially curl the upper spine off the mat. Keep the pelvis in neutral.



3. Inhale as you hold the position.
4. Exhale as you sequentially roll back down to the starting position.

### Teaching points:

**Aim**

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- to mobilise the spine and teach sequential rotation of the spine

**Starting position**

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- sit tall on a mat\*, knees bent, the soles of the feet together. The feet are far enough away to allow the hips to remain open
- fold your arms in front of you, just below shoulder height - cossack style



\* If necessary, sit on a folded towel or rolled up mat to achieve a neutral lengthened spine. Or you may perform this exercise seated on a chair - feet grounded, hip width apart and parallel - or standing.

Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

**Action**

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1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: starting with the head, lengthen and sequentially rotate the spine to one side, keeping the pelvis still and facing forward



3. Inhale as you sequentially rotate the spine back to the starting position.

Repeat five times to each side.



Teaching points:

## Side twist preparation

Level 1

### Aim

---

- to mobilise the spine and teach sequential movement in lateral flexion

### Starting position

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- sit tall on a mat\*, knees bent, the soles of the feet together. The feet are far enough away to allow the hips to remain open
- lengthen the arms down by the side of the body



\* If necessary, sit on a folded towel or rolled up mat to achieve a neutral lengthened spine. Or you perform this exercise seated on a chair - feet grounded hip width apart and parallel - or standing.

Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

### Action

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1. Inhale to prepare and raise the arm out to the side and upwards (as for arm raises).
2. Exhale: initiating with the head, sequentially laterally flex the spine to the left. Place the left hand on the mat to give support, the elbow will naturally bend.



3. Inhale: maintain the position.

4. Exhale: return the spine back to the upright position. Lower the arm back down by the side of the body.

Repeat five times to each side.

**Teaching points:**

### Aim

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- to mobilise the cervical and thoracic spine in extension

### Starting position

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- lie prone, the pelvis and spine are in neutral
- legs are slightly wider than hip-width and laterally rotated
- hands are placed palms down onto the mat slightly higher than the shoulders and approximately shoulder-width apart
- the elbows are bent and in contact with the mat



Engage the core muscles appropriately to control your movements throughout the exercise.

### Action

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1. Inhale to prepare.
2. Exhale: initiating with the head, sequentially extend the upper spine: lift the head, cervical and upper thoracic spine one vertebra at a time. The lower ribs may lift slightly away from the mat and the lower spine will react accordingly. The elbows will begin to straighten slightly.
3. Inhale: hold the position, lengthening the spine.
4. Exhale: bending the elbows, return the spine and head sequentially back down to the mat.



Repeat up to ten times.

### Teaching points: