



# Suné du Toit & Associates

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## Pilates ABC class

Pilates is all about natural flowing movement. Practiced regularly and correctly, Pilates will literally change the way you move, look and feel.

Pilates addresses postural correction, strengthening of stabilising/postural muscles and maintaining flexibility.

The importance of the stabilising muscles is becoming increasingly clear in medical research. Let's say for a moment you want to reach up to take a book from a high shelf. Which muscles do you think would be the first to engage? The hand or the shoulder muscles perhaps? The answer is the deep postural muscles, those which support the spine. It makes sense: you don't want to fall over while you reach up. These deep muscles form a natural corset, a girdle of strength so that movement can take place easily, smoothly and safely.

Physiotherapists see problems that are related to poor posture/stabilisers.

The core muscle stabilises the spine to stop shearing. The stabilisers need to work for a long period at a time. The stabilisers normally only work 20-30% of their full efficiency. So remember only activate the core up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> notch.

Postural education is a continuous process. It is recommended that Pilates is done at least 3 hours a week. I am very aware of how difficult it is to fit an "extra" 3 hours in a week. I do know that if you are part of an exercise group the motivation increases tremendously to continue with exercises on a daily basis (15-20 minutes a day over 7 days alongside an hour class a week equals 3 hours).

## **Remember ABC (Alignment, breathing and core)**

### **A Standing alignment (in front of the mirror)**

1. String of balloons lengthening from top of head (head not tilting forward or backwards)
2. Shoulders relaxed and shoulder blades connected with the opposite buttocks
3. Rib cage over pelvis (not flared)
4. Pelvis in neutral (not tilting forward or backwards)
5. Zipped up and hollow
6. Knees soft and aligned with hips and shoulder width apart. Feet aligned with knees, check weight bearing through triangle in feet (heel, outside ball of foot, inside ball of foot)
7. Equal weight bearing - Put weight on right foot and then transfer to left foot with eyes closed to find equal weight bearing. Open eyes and check equal weight bearing (check shape of your sides), ensure pelvis not rotated (check belly button pointing forwards)

### **B Breathing**

1. Standing with good alignment as above
2. Ensure shoulders stay relaxed
3. Breathe in through nose towards the lower ribcage. Feel the lower ribcage expand and the stomach relax outwards.
4. Breathe out through your mouth
5. Repeat 5-10 times

### **C Rest position (on back), alignment, Breathing x 10**

1. Rest position, check alignment (head on folded towel, knees aligned with hips feet aligned with knees, pelvic in neutral (pelvic diamond))
2. Breathe in through nose
3. Breathe out through mouth, zip up and hollow (3rd notch) - make sure no bracing and no pelvic movement whilst activating core.
4. Hold core for 5-10 breaths - check on release of core that shoulders and chest was relaxed whilst core activated.

Hip twists -> theraband around knees



1. Once comfortable with above include hip twist. Don't let pelvis follow leg movement and do not let supporting leg move whilst dropping other leg.
2. Movement on breathing out i.e. Breathing in and zip up and hollow on breathing out, breathing in and drop knee out on breathing out, breath in and bring leg back to rest position on breathing out. Repeat with other knee. Repeat 5-10 each knee
3. Progress by having yellow, red or green theraband around knees and do as above



### Single knee lifts



1. Start in rest position with knees aligned with hip and feet aligned with knees
2. Breath in through nose and on breathing out through mouth, lift one knee to table top position ensuring the knee does not go past hip (towards chest) and knee as well as foot is aligned with hip. Lift the foot slowly (lightening the scale under your foot) to ensure the pelvis does not tilt or the back does not hollow. Start with only lifting the heel if this occurs on lifting the foot.
3. Breath in whilst holding position and breathing lower foot back to mat
4. Repeat with other leg
5. Repeat 5-10 each leg

### Bridging



1. Start in rest position with knees aligned with hip and feet aligned with knees
2. Ensure pelvis lift level (string of pearls)
3. Lift pelvis until only upper back is supported on mat and pelvis are lifted but no higher than hips.
4. Lower pelvis down level (string of pearls)
5. Repeat 5-10 times