

LESSON 1: FUNDAMENTALS OF PILATES

Grade-Level Outcomes

Primary Outcome

Fitness activities: Demonstrates competency in 1 or more specialized skills in health-related fitness activities. (S1.H3.L1)

Embedded Outcome

Movement concepts, principles & knowledge: Applies the terminology associated with exercise and participation in selected individual-performance activities, dance, net/wall games, target games, aquatics and/or outdoor pursuits appropriately. (S2.H1.L1)

Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- evaluate her posture.
- practice the hook-lying position and breathing techniques.
- demonstrate basic Pilates exercises correctly.

Equipment and Materials

- Mats
- Music
- Stereo equipment
- Resistance bands or straps

Introduction

Today, we will begin a module on Pilates, which is a great functional fitness activity to develop core strength and flexibility. It's also a type of workout that's easy to complete at home because it doesn't require a lot of special equipment. You might have heard about Pilates because it's a very popular fitness activity among celebrities. [Provide a brief background about Pilates, if desired.] By the end of this module, you'll understand how Pilates can contribute to your fitness and wellness. The exercises will be simple at first, but as we move through the module, they will become more challenging. We'll be using the same exercises for several classes so that you can reap their benefits thoroughly before we move on. We'll start this lesson with some fundamentals of Pilates. In Pilates, technique is very important, so stay focused on performing the movements correctly.

Instructional Task: Posture Check

■ PRACTICE TASK

Good posture uses deep abdominals to support the body and is an important aspect of Pilates. You should check and practice your posture a few times each day until good posture becomes a habit.

Have students go through a posture check.

Guiding questions for students:

- Is your weight balanced?
- Are your shoulders down and relaxed?
- How do you feel when you gently tighten your abdominals?
- What are the benefits of good posture?

Refinement

Tell students to imagine there is a string at the top of their heads that is gently pulling the head and neck upward.

Extension

Students can practice in front of a mirror in class or at home.

Student Choices/Differentiation

Use visual aids to demonstrate good posture alignment.

What to Look For

- Students are relaxed.
- Students' alignment is improving with feedback.

Instructional Task: Hook-Lying Position

■ PRACTICE TASK

This is a fundamental position for Pilates work. Students lie on the floor on their backs with knees bent in neutral spine position (back rests naturally on the ground, neither flat nor arched—students should be able to slide a hand into the space between the back and the floor). Hands are on the rib cage.

Instruct students to breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth, being attentive to the sensations of breathing and the movement. Practice for eight breathing cycles.

Refinement

Students should feel their hands rise up and down as they breathe. It may help if they close their eyes.

Student Choices/Differentiation

Use a poster or video clip to demonstrate the position.

What to Look For

- Students are breathing deliberately.
- Students' chests are rising during the breath cycle.

Instructional Task: Warm-Up (10-14 Minutes)

■ PRACTICE TASK

Now that we've practiced some fundamentals, we will do a warm-up with basic breathing and exercises. We will start each class with this warm-up or a slight variation.

Students practice four-count breathing techniques.

Demonstrate a routine of 4 to 10 full-body stretches and preparation exercises for the workout (e.g., neutral spine, drawing in, head nod, arms over, arm circles, shoulder circles, side stretches, pelvic curl, chest lift, leg lift supine, spine twist supine, pelvic clock, knee folds, sphinx, cobra, bridge). Students follow along and practice the exercises.

EMBEDDED OUTCOME: S2.H1.1.1 The warm-up is a great opportunity to teach students about the appropriate terminology of the exercises and review the names of the muscles they are using.

Student Choices/Differentiation

Use visual aids or review video clips to demonstrate the stretches and exercises.

What to Look For

- Students are breathing deeply, focusing on exhaling on the way up.
- Students achieve an optimal range of motion in the stretches.
- Students are performing core-based exercises with control and at the optimal pace (3 seconds up, 3 seconds down).

Instructional Task: Pilates Beginner Workout (Up to 40 Minutes)

■ PRACTICE TASK

Design or select a beginner workout sequence. You can also use a beginner Pilates DVD. Demonstrate each exercise and have students practice their form. Focus on mat work. Limit the number of repetitions while students are learning the positions.

Here are some suggested exercises:

- Chest lift
- Hundred
- Roll-up
- One-leg circle
- Rolling like a ball
- Open-leg balance
- Sidekick series
- Front support (plank)
- Saw
- Mermaid
- Swan prep
- Wall roll-down

Refinement

Range of motion is not as important as maintaining body control. The movement can be small, as long as the position can be maintained.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students can modify the number of repetitions for their level.
- Hundred: Students can start with feet on the floor or in tabletop position (harder).
- Roll like a ball: Students can practice C curve or supported roll-back.
- Plank and mermaid: Students can have the lower arm extended or forearm on the mat.
- For leg exercises, students with tight hamstrings can bend slightly at the knees.

What to Look For

- Students are performing all exercises with control and at an optimal pace.
- Students are breathing rhythmically, with the exhale on the more difficult (concentric) phase of the movement. Students should not hold the breath.

Instructional Task: Cool-Down and Review (5-6 Minutes)

■ PRACTICE TASK

Lead students in a stretching routine:

- Lower back
- Glutes
- Hamstrings
- Lats
- Abdominals
- Chest
- Obliques
- Quadriceps

Relax, focusing on breathing:

- Supine position
- Prone position

Refinement

Students close their eyes and focus on those areas of the body that may be tense in order to try to relax that muscle group.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Stretches can be performed using a band.
- Students move through the stretches at their own pace.

What to Look For

- Students are performing the stretches slowly and with control.
 - Students are holding each stretch for 30 to 60 seconds.
 - Students are breathing deeply during each stretch.
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Formal and Informal Assessments

Exit slip: List two key ideas about Pilates exercises.

Closure

- Rate how difficult the exercises were for you on a scale of 1 to 5 as I call out the names of the exercises.
- How is this type of exercise different from aerobic or traditional weight-training exercises?
- At the beginning, this type of workout can make you sore. Do some extra stretching outside of class.
- Next class, we will continue to work on our beginner routine.

Reflection

- Which exercises are students struggling with?
- Where are they most successful?

Homework

For next class, research the six key principles of Pilates. Write them down and be prepared to discuss them.

Resources

Crowther, A., & Petre, H. (2009). *Total Pilates: The step-by-step guide to Pilates at home for everybody*. London: Duncan Baird.

Pilates exercises: <http://pilates.about.com/od/pilatesmat/tp/BeginnerExercises.htm>

Internet keyword search: "Pilates," "Pilates beginner workouts," "hook-lying position," "Pilates posture"