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# Lifewise

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SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE  
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Adding years of healthy life

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## GERMAN FITNESS TRAINER

Joseph Pilates, founder of the eponymous physical fitness system, ‘Pilates’, once said, “In 10 sessions you’ll feel the difference, in 20 sessions you’ll see the difference, and in 30 sessions you’ll have a whole new body.”

Practised by millions of people worldwide, Pilates has been found to be effective in improving flexibility and dynamic balance. In a review which analysed 16 different studies and published in the *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* a few years ago, researchers stated that Pilates may also boost muscular endurance.

“Pilates improve a person’s functional fitness through exercises that simulate common movements used in daily activities,” says freelance Pilates instructor Ms Farrah Teo.

It is for this reason and its effects on his daily living that long-time practitioner Mr Ievan Darwin, 27, was drawn to the exercise. “Everyday tasks such as carrying groceries and climbing stairs have been made much easier,” says Mr Darwin, a student, who started Pilates about five years ago. How quickly results are felt are, however, dependent on factors such as commitment of participants, presence of existing injuries and involvement in other physical activities.

Pronounced as “pi-lah-teez”, the low-impact body-conditioning exercise method was first developed in the 1920s by Joseph Pilates. He named the exercise “contrology”, as it emphasises controlled movements and focused breathing. It was only after Pilates died that the workout assumed his name.

A Pilates routine — with its precisely-executed repetitive movements — may bear close resemblance to those in yoga and *tai chi*. All three disciplines enhance balance and coordination, and are strengthening workouts. However, Pilates does not involve spiritual meditation, unlike the other two. In Pilates, attention is centred on the “powerhouse” — core muscles in the torso, pelvis and hips.

## THE FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PILATES

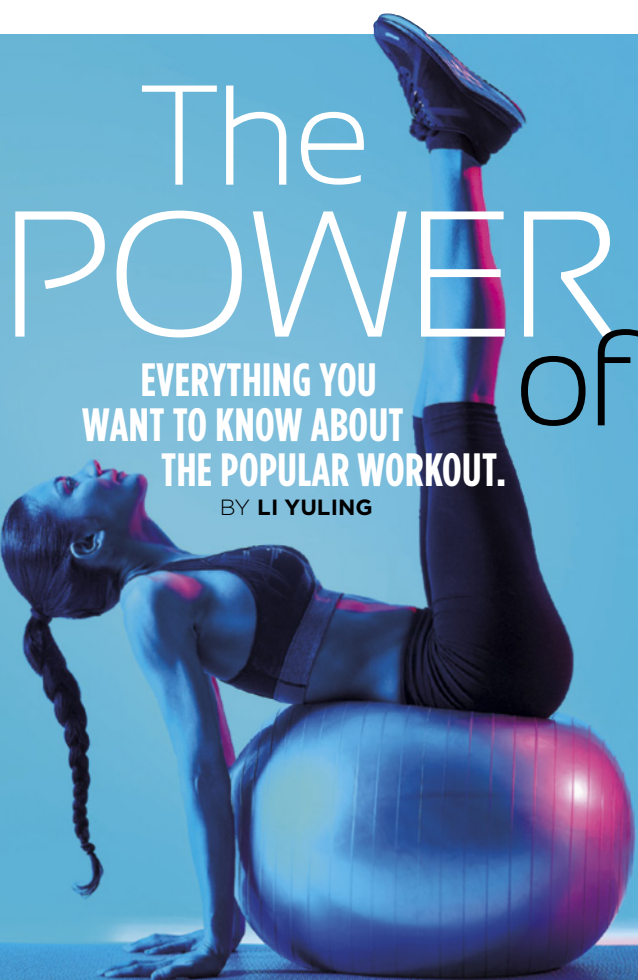
- ▶▶ Breathing
- ▶▶ Pelvic placement
- ▶▶ Rib cage placement
- ▶▶ Scapular (shoulder blade) movement and stabilisation
- ▶▶ Cervical (spine) and neck placement



## Forms And Functions

In Singapore, there are more than 10 studios that specialise in Pilates. Like other centres around the world, these offer different varieties of the exercise. There are basically two main types: classical Pilates as conceived by its founder; and contemporary Pilates, which tends to combine classical exercises with tools and movements underscored by modern sports science, physiotherapy and biomechanics. Stott Pilates is one such contemporary form, developed in the 1980s by Lindsay and Moira Merrithew, and commonly practised in ‘modern’ Pilates outfits.

The main difference between classical and Stott Pilates is that the former espouses maintaining a straight back during exercise while the latter recommends keeping a “neutral spine”, that is, the spine should hold its natural curve. Classical Pilates follows the founder’s original series of movements and prescribed sequences closely.



The  
POWER  
of  
EVERYTHING YOU  
WANT TO KNOW ABOUT  
THE POPULAR WORKOUT.  
BY LI YULING



Supervision is required if you are new to equipment-assisted Pilates.

## MIXING IT UP

Hybrid workouts that combine Pilates moves with elements of other exercises.

**AQUA PILATES** Pilates moves are executed in a pool, with the water creating a zero-gravity feel and resistance.

**BARRE** Incorporating elements of Pilates, ballet and athletic conditioning, Barre workouts focus on precision and technique.

**BODY BALANCE** A fusion workout mixing Pilates with yoga and *tai chi* exercises.



**PILATES INTENSE INTERVAL TRAINING (PIIT)**

This 28-minute workout alternates between Pilates and cardio exercises.

**PILOXING** A strength and cardio workout that combines standing Pilates, boxing and dance moves.

**YOGALATES** Blending the practice of yoga with Pilates, this East-meets-West discipline aims to foster a stronger mind-body connection.

## Tools Of The Trade

Joseph Pilates created exercises to be performed on the mat and with resistance machines — the most well-known being the Pilates Reformer. Many of Pilates' exercises have also been adopted in dance curriculums and are used to improve flexibility. Today, most studios offer both mat and reformer or equipment-assisted Pilates lessons to cater to different fitness needs.

At Pilates studios like Power Moves, mat work typically comprises a series of floor exercises performed while lying on the back, side or front. Exercise equipment such as the magic circle, fit ball and free weights may also be included in the routine to up the challenge. In 2010, a group of Portuguese and German researchers found that after six months of Pilates-based mat exercise, people not only felt better about their bodies and health, but also felt

## Who Is Pilates For?

If you have been inactive for some time, a slow, easy start is better than none at all. A 2016 study on young, sedentary women in Hungary found that once-weekly Pilates training over 10 weeks was enough to yield tangible physical and psychological benefits, including enhanced flexibility, balance, core and abdominal muscle strength, body awareness and improved mood management. Another research, published in *Preventive Medicine* in 2015, found that Pilates help seniors improve their gait and muscle strength, which in turn reduces their risk of falls.

For those with prior injuries, Pilates may aid the rehabilitative process by addressing muscular imbalances and improving mobility. Tan Tock Seng Hospital offers Clinical Pilates, a programme that combines Pilates with the latest scientific research to help clients manage back pain, strengthen the back, tone the abdominal muscles and improve stabilisation of the back so that they are able to move more freely and gracefully again.

To be safe, consult your doctor before embarking on any exercise routine, especially if you have a health issue or have previously sustained an injury.

# PILATES

more satisfied with life.

Equipment-based Pilates classes typically use apparatus such as the Reformer, Pilates Chair and Tower. These equipment are designed to enhance the Pilates workout by providing support and/or additional resistance. Studios typically require that those new to Pilates apparatus seek supervision and guidance from instructors to operate the tools safely and correctly. The Reformer, for example, supposedly helps with postural alignment, enabling the exerciser to channel more attention to breathing, body awareness and coordination. It is a large machine consisting of a moving platform that slides along a carriage track, as well as springs that provide resistance, and straps for support. Pilates Fitness, which offers Pilates Chair classes, recommends the workout for improving balance and strength.

## The Right Price

Pilates lessons tend to be pricier because of the rigorous training that instructors must undergo to obtain certification. For instance, the Certified Pilates Teacher (CPT) examination offered by the Pilates Method Alliance (PMA) measures skill and knowledge level based on 450 hours or more of self-study and assisted teaching hours.

According to local chain Pilates Fitness, the small class size and equipment also contribute to the higher cost. But don't be put off, as **ActiveSG\*** offers off-peak Pilates classes starting from \$95. **LW**

\* [www.myactivesg.com](http://www.myactivesg.com)