

Home Exercises for the Summer Part 4

It's been great so far, and you're feeling stronger than ever - ready to tackle anything. Before jumping into the exercises below, be sure to warm up with your basic workout from Part 1, and include a focus area such as shoulder girdle organization (with Theraband) and/or lower extremity strengthening such as squats against the wall. Now that you are familiar with the movements from parts 1-3, aim to keep a brisk pace throughout the workout, maintaining steady pace without sacrificing form. Coordinate one breath cycle per movement and set a rhythm which slightly elevates your heart rate. Integrate the exercises below for a truly comprehensive Pilates Mat workout.

I. Sculpt and Strengthen – Lower Extremity Burn



1) Single Leg Kicks. From prone position, now prop yourself up on your elbows, scooping the abdominals and opening the collarbones square to the front. Be sure not to collapse in the shoulders! Activate the legs so strongly that the kneecaps come off the floor. On two sniff inhales, pulse the right leg up twice, bending at the knee, kicking the heel sharply towards the right buttock. On a long exhale, extend from the knee, straightening the leg behind you, aiming to keep the right knee off the ground, and the hip bones even and firmly pressing into the mat. Resist gravity's pull! Don't let your back or shoulders sag as you perform 6 sets. Press back into a wide-knee child's pose and prepare for your final sets – Planks and Leg Pulls.



2) Wall Squats with Ball. Place a small ball or large Fitball in lumbar spine and stand against a wall, feet hip width apart; step the feet away from the wall approx. thigh distance and extend the arms in front of shoulders. Slide down the ball until hips and knees flex to 90°. Be careful to keep the spine in neutral and the shoulders drawn back into alignment. Think of narrowing the buttocks and engage pelvic muscles to roll back up the wall to standing. Repeat 6-8 times. A large Swiss ball can also be used to perform this exercise (slightly easier than with a small ball). Add torso rotation as in Single Leg Teaser with Rotation for extra challenge and/or perform upper body workout with resistance band while holding the squat position.

IV. Sculpt and Strengthen – Upper Extremity Burn



3) Plank to Tricep Press. From Child's Pose, draw yourself up onto all 4's, with the hands placed under shoulders, and knees under hips; step one leg at a time out to a plank pose. Lengthen crown of the head forward, not sagging the neck. Tuck tailbone under, draw navel up to the spine, and engage lower gluteals and lats. Bend the elbows, hugging them tight into the ribs for a Tricep Press. Exhale and press up strongly, always sliding shoulders away from the ears and engaging the Powerhouse so you look like one long, strong line of energy hovering above your mat. Perform 6-10x, never compromising alignment, particularly the neck. Less is more! Keep your head on the same plane as your thoracic spine. Hover in plank, preparing for Leg Pull (Facing) Down.



4) Leg Pull –Down. From Plank, merely flick your right toes off the mat to point the toe and slightly raise the leg up. The core and shoulder positions remain intact. Internal obliques are firing to prevent a shift in the pelvis. Put right foot down, then flick left toes up, slightly lifting the leg. Repeat, changing sides, 8x. Lower knees to the mat and press back to Child's pose, then flip over so you are facing upright, and press the arms behind you, fingers rotated towards the hips, legs elongated out in front of you on the mat. Prepare for Leg Pull – Up. This position is similar to a Table Top press up, except the legs are extended fully in front of you.



5) Leg Pull – Up. From the starting position described above, curl the tailbone up and away from the floor, and ensure you've pushed back so shoulders are over wrists. Point toes strongly down to mat, curl up with buttocks. Try to be as light as possible on the hands and heels pressing into the mat. Be careful not to externally rotate at the thigh. Strongly inhale, lifting the right leg up vigorously to the ceiling, then float it down. Repeat on the left side, keeping the pelvis stable and even. Perform 8 sets. Then lower the pelvis down and stretch forward over the legs, reaching fingers to the toes.

Relax and congratulations! You've just performed an Intermediate-Advanced Mat Workout!