

pilates principles

These five basic principles are key to doing Pilates with control and thus with maximum results. It takes a little while to get familiar with incorporating these principles into your moves, but they become automatic over time. Time and patience with yourself is required.

Breathing The focus is on breathing **deeply**, in through the nose and out through softly pursed lips. You gently **contract the pelvic floor muscles on the out breath**, which in turn helps in engaging the deep support muscles of the lumbo-pelvic region (the transversus abdominus). Emphasis is put on breathing **into the backs and sides of the lungs** - in normal life, we tend to breathe only into the top part of our lungs. Deep exhalation – emptying the lungs fully – is followed by deep inhalation. This focus on deep breathing encourages relaxation of the shoulders and good oxygenation of the blood.

Pelvic placement You will hear a lot about the placement of your pelvis during your Pilates class! When your pelvis is in '**neutral**', the natural curve of your spine is present. Your pelvis will be in neutral during movements when both feet are on the mat. The '**imprinted position**' is a slight posterior (backwards) tilt of the pelvis – where you contract the oblique muscles between your hips and ribs to slightly flatten your back into the mat. The imprinted position gives you stability and protects your lower back when you are doing movements with your legs off the mat.

Rib cage placement The abdominal wall attaches to the lower ribs. During the Pilates class, you will be reminded to try and keep the abdominal attachment to the ribs; to keep your **rib cage flat against the abdominal wall**, i.e., ribs not lifting up, for example, when you raise your arms overhead.

Scapular movement & stability *This principle is really important in the context of the computer age we live in.* The scapulae (shoulder blades) are held in place by a complex series of muscles with only one bony attachment (to the clavicle). It is really important to **balance these surrounding muscles** and to control the movement of the scapulae. Stabilising the scapulae is vital before you start every movement.

Head & cervical spine placement The cervical spine (top of the spine) should hold its natural curve and the skull should be balanced directly above the shoulders in sitting or standing. The cervical spine should follow the line of the thoracic spine in neutral – this is particularly important when you are raising your shoulders and upper body off the mat. To this end, you must nod your head slightly (bring your chin gently towards your chest) before flexing the upper torso off the mat. This stabilizes the cervical area and avoids neck strain.