



Bottoms Up

Take these lower-body workouts for a spin to see how the other half lives

BY JEN JONES

(The Secret to Toned Arms, Buns & Thighs, DVD/VHS, \$14.95,

Stott Pilates, stottpilates.com)

Yearning for more after your mat workout? Roll on over to the Reformer for the *Xercizer Lower Body* challenge. Stepping the intensity up a notch, this video incorporates cardio and strength-training elements for optimal sculpting success. Aided by an instructional voiceover and helpful scrolling tips, two instructors demonstrate a series of exercises utilizing pelvic and ribcage stabilization techniques. Save up your energy for the plyometric jump segments sprinkled throughout the workout, which was created by exercise physiologist Elyse McNergney. *(Jim=x Xercizer Lower Body, VHS, \$25, The Xercise Corp., xercise.com)*

If a long day leaves you dreading such a high-energy workout, consider taking a relaxing trip to the Middle East with *Bellydance for Beginners: Fitness Fusion Pilates*. Though some might scoff at the idea of fusing belly dance and Pilates, the similarities become apparent after viewing this innovative video. As both disciplines require a great deal of core strength, muscle isolation is key to practicing each correctly. Instructor Suhaila Salimpour incorporates the elegant undulations of belly dance into standard Pilates mat and standing work, targeting the stomach and glutes.

Afterwards, slip on some finger cymbals and dance in the living room alongside Salimpour's performance. *(Bellydance for Beginners with Suhaila, DVD/VHS, \$14.98, Natural Journeys, naturaljourneys.com)*

Multimedia

Core Conditioning Pilates

Instructors: Michelle Dozois and Tracy York

Level: Beginner/intermediate

Equipment: Mat



This DVD is a great stepping stone for any level. Dozois and York present the workout in a layered, informative way. They use the slow pace of the warm-up to introduce new

vocabulary, such as C-curve, and show the corresponding movement. The clarity and precision of the vocal cueing translate into precise body alignment and positioning. Though advanced students may miss the flowing motion of a standard class, the explicit instructions will clear up any confusion about exercises and will deepen the work for experienced Pilates practitioners.

Bottom Line: A tool of great clarity to get the beginner on the right track and for the intermediate student to advance.

42 minutes. DVD (\$14.95)

Anchor Bay Entertainment

Find it: collagevideo.com

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From bulging bellies to flabby thighs, the lower body has no shortage of potential problem areas. Though regular Pilates practice gives your body a longer, leaner appearance, more targeted initiatives are useful in toning trouble spots. Lick love handles and lumps with these recent Pilates-based videos that whittle from the waist down.

With video veteran Moira Merrithew at the helm, *The Secret to Toned Arms, Buns & Thighs* is the latest installment of Stott Pilates' considerable collection. Geared at beginner and intermediate levels, the workout takes viewers through 32 mat exercises designed to shape the arms, glutes and thighs. The approach is simple, focusing on firing up the muscle groups that lead to lower-body results. Those just beginning their Pilates journey will appreciate Merrithew's detailed explanations, in the introductory vignettes, of proper breathing and body placement.

your heart pumping and tone with Pilates for a comprehensive workout.

45 minutes. DVD (\$14.95)

Merrithew Entertainment

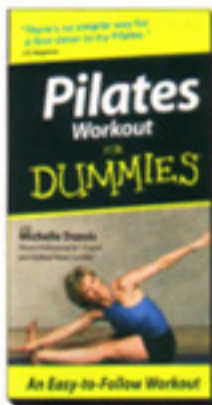
Find it: stottpilates.com

Pilates Workout for Dummies

Instructor: Michelle Dozois

Level: Beginner

Equipment: Mat



Learning Pilates is made simple with this 40-minute video featuring demonstrations of 18 popular mat exercises, including the Hundred, Criss-Cross and Rolling Like a Ball.

After showing you basic positions such as neutral pelvis and correct spinal alignment, Dozois slowly guides you through each exercise, then lets you try a few repetitions. Understandably, teaching Pilates is the primary focus of this video, while practicing Pilates takes a backseat. (Translation: once you've mastered these moves, you may want to work up more of a sweat with another, more advanced, video.) **Bottom Line:** This easy-to-follow video is a great tool for first-timers interested in learning common mat exercises.

40 minutes. VHS (\$9.98) or DVD (\$14.98).

Anchor Bay Entertainment.

Find it: anchorbayentertainment.com

The Intermediate Challenge Total Fitness Workout

Instructor: Cathie Murakami

Level: Intermediate

Equipment: Mat



Although this video is geared to practitioners with a healthy grasp of Pilates fundamentals, Murakami does a great job of making the movements accessible to all. Blending facets of both Pilates and yoga, the

workout offers a heavy emphasis on rotation and stretching, with plenty of modifications based on skill and flexibility levels. In a straightforward pre-

sensation, Murakami leads a group of seven enthusiasts who humanize the workout with groans and laughter at challenging sections, reactions that are not often seen in instructional videos. The importance of "accurate work" is stressed, even if it means doing fewer repetitions while paying greater attention to form. **Bottom**

Line: Offering frequent tips on technique, Murakami and her crew have designed a satisfying no-frills whole-body toning experience.

60 minutes. VHS/DVD (\$24.95).

Synergy Systems

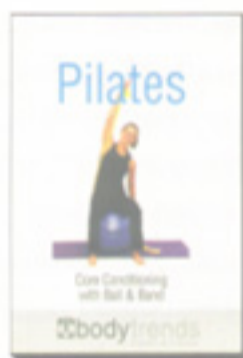
Find it: synergypilates.com

Pilates Core Conditioning with Ball & Band

Instructor: Julie Tomlinson

Level: Beginner to experienced

Equipment: Mat, exercise ball, resistance band



Designed as a conditioning workout for all levels, Santa Barbara-based Tomlinson uses props to simulate traditional Pilates apparatus.

Tomlinson gives easy to follow directions and offers words of encouragement as she leads moves that target the upper body, buttocks and abdominals. **Bottom Line:** For those short on time, this workout covers all the bases.

25 minutes. DVD (\$27.99) VHS (\$24.99).

Bodytrends Health & Fitness, Inc.

Find it: bodytrends.com

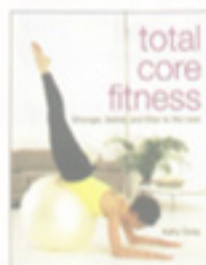
Books

Total Core Fitness: Stronger, Leaner, and Fitter to the Core

By Kathy Corey

Level: Beginner to advanced

Equipment: Mat, ball, core band, strap, weights



Concise, organized, and easy to reference, this book melds several complementary styles—Pilates, yoga, weight training and stability-ball work—for a