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The Spine Corrector And Pilates Arc

by [Jillian Hessel](#)

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Equipment: Help clients go deeper into their practice with this fun, versatile piece of equipment.



The Pilates spine corrector (also known as the step barrel, or Pilates arc) is a small, adaptable Pilates apparatus that can enhance any workout. In this article, we'll explore different types of arcs and suggest various uses for each piece. Most clients love the variety of exercises the arc accommodates, and they also enjoy the extra mind-body challenge when a familiar mat exercise is transferred to the arc's rounded surface.

Features

The spine corrector's curved surface creates a whole new challenge as you work with (or against) gravity on an incline or a decline, as opposed to the mat's flat surface. Therefore, clients can target range of motion in the hips, shoulders and spine from a new perspective. For example, when a



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classic Pilates mat exercise such as a roll-over is transferred onto the arc, you target core muscles in a completely different way. Working on the arc enhances mental focus, concentration and muscle recruitment.

Let's examine the original spine corrector design. This apparatus has a padded, upholstered wooden arc with a ledge surface, or step, attached to it. Various handholds are either cut out or attached to the sides. Clients typically position their upper bodies on the mat and grip the handholds while the hips are elevated on top of the arc. The handholds help keep the body stable and prevent the apparatus from slipping away during inverted exercises.

One note of caution: The curved surface of the spine corrector and arcs can result in inversion (head below the heart) in some instances. Exercises involving inversion are not recommended for persons with high blood pressure, sleep apnea, intervertebral disk problems or neck problems, or for anyone who is pregnant.

The spine corrector works wonderfully as a standalone piece of equipment, or it can be used in combination with other equipment. In one very basic back-extension exercise, the client begins seated on the flat portion, or step, facing forward. She then performs a spinal extension exercise by leaning backward over the curved surface of the arc. This is a safe way to perform an articulated spinal extension with the entire length of the spine supported.

Because it places the client in a declined position, the curved surface adds a challenge during a roll-up. The core muscles are activated more deeply than they are from a flat mat Pilates roll-up. For weaker clients, try placing the spine corrector onto the cadillac. Use the arm springs during the roll-down, working the abs deeply against the pull of the springs. During the roll-up, the arm springs assist the client in completing the movement.

Arc Variety

A number of arc designs are available on today's market, and among them, construction, weight, price and dimensions vary. Some arcs have more acute curves, which work well for clients with more flexible spines. Other arcs have longer, more elongated curves that are better suited for less flexible, taller clients. Some arcs have shallower steps, and some have higher seats. Also, the amount of padding can vary greatly, as can the handholds.

The new lightweight Pilates arcs have no padding, but they are a relatively inexpensive choice for a group class. These arcs (made of the same lightweight compressed foam as a foam roller) can also be used on the reformer, as they have specially designed cutouts that fit over the reformer's shoulder rests. Using the arc's curved surface on the reformer instead of the standard short/long box opens up myriad exercise possibilities. In the case of the step barrel, one size does *not* fit all, and most private studios opt to have several different styles and sizes on hand. Therefore, storage may become an issue, especially if you have multiple pieces of small equipment. Research the various options, which include an interchangeable arc system that is a potential space saver.

Which Option to Choose

How do you decide which arc to purchase? Here are some tips:

- First, take some classes on the apparatus.
- Consider where you will be using the equipment, and for what type of client/group class.
- Keep in mind storage space, and purchase only what you can accommodate.
- When you are ready to buy, compare the various manufacturers' offerings online. Note shipping prices, as well as equipment weight, size and dimensions.

If you plan to attend a Pilates conference in the near future, you'll find most of the major equipment manufacturers have a booth in the exdo hall. where you can trv out their equipment (the 2014 IDEA

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The good news is there's an arc for every budget, and a usable design for nearly every client. No matter which type of spine corrector or arc you choose, you and your clients are sure to discover a treasure of variety and fun using this wonderful adjunct to the Pilates system.

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SIDEBAR: Spine Corrector And Pilates Arc Resources

Balanced Body®: www.pilates.com/BBAPP/V/store/arcs-barrels.html

Gratz™ Pilates: <http://pilates-gratz.com/barrels.html>

Merrithew Health & Fitness™: www.merrithew.com/shop/ProductDetail/ST01011_Spine-Corrector

Peak Pilates®: www.peakpilates.com/en/webshop/products/85/barrels?gclid=CPCpm_GQ-boCFaSDQgodXE8ANw

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I am a retired ballet dancer. My passion is health & fitness, and helping people get into the best ... [more](#)

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September 2011 IDEA Fitness Journal Quiz 4: Plyometric Training



This continuing education quiz is an in-depth look at plyometric training. Plyometric exercises—jumping, bounding, hopping, arm pushing, and catching and throwing weighted objects such as machine balls—are movements that involve rapid eccentric and concentric muscle actions.



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