

# Core 34 Movement Lab

## The Classical Pilates Movements & TCM Integration

The 34 classical Pilates mat exercises, as created by Joseph Pilates, are more than a physical sequence. Each movement blends breath, core control, and precise alignment to build strength, mobility, and resilience. When viewed through the lens of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), these exercises also become a practice in circulating *Qi* (vital energy) through the body's meridian pathways.

- **Physical Integration:** Pilates activates the powerhouse - the deep core muscles - while supporting full-body mobility, spinal health, and joint stability. Each exercise has a unique physical focus, from strengthening the posterior chain to increasing rotational flexibility.
- **Energetic Integration:** TCM sees movement and breath as inseparable for health. Pilates' emphasis on breath-led control stimulates different organ-meridian pairs, harmonizing Yin and Yang, nourishing the body's reserves, and encouraging emotional balance.
- **Five Element Connection:** Each exercise can be linked to one or more of the Five Elements — Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water - both physically (via meridian stimulation) and poetically (via emotional and seasonal qualities). For example:
  - **Wood:** flexibility, growth, vision — hip openers, spinal rotations.
  - **Fire:** vitality, joy, heart opening — chest lifts, backbends.
  - **Earth:** grounding, nourishment — stable holds, centering postures.
  - **Metal:** clarity, letting go — breath-focused movements, arm pumping.
  - **Water:** restoration, adaptability — inversions, deep core folds.

By pairing classical Pilates precision with the energetic insights of TCM, each movement becomes a holistic experience which can strengthen the body, harmonize energy flow, and deepen mind-body awareness.

# Background on the Core 34

## Origins

- Created by Joseph Pilates in the early 1900s.
- Introduced publicly in his book *Return to Life Through Contrology* (1945).
- Designed as a daily conditioning sequence to restore vitality, posture, and resilience.
- Typically lasted 25 minutes or so, but never had a set duration.

## Intended Audience

- Originally practiced by dancers, circus performers, gymnasts, and athletes in New York, especially those from the performing arts community.
- These groups already had high strength, flexibility, and body awareness, so the classical sequence was tailored to very conditioned bodies.
- Meant to be done without breaks, as one flowing routine — highly demanding both physically and mentally.

## Purpose & Philosophy

- Build a “uniformly developed body” and strong powerhouse (deep core, spine, hips, glutes).
- Balance strength + flexibility + control + breath.
- Based on Pilates’ six principles: Concentration, Control, Centering, Precision, Breath, Flow.
- Structured like a progression: warm-up → core strengthening → spinal articulation → inversions/rotations → back extensions → balance → finish with upper-body power.

## Physical Benefits

- Improves posture, spinal mobility, and joint health.
- Develops strength and endurance without external weights.
- Promotes fluid, coordinated, functional movement.

## Precautions

- The classical sequence was not originally designed for the general population.
- Many of the 34 moves are advanced, requiring Strong core and spinal support, good flexibility (especially hamstrings, shoulders, and spine), awareness of alignment and breath.
- Not ideal for beginners, sedentary individuals, or those with injuries (neck, spine, joints, pregnancy, osteoporosis).
- Modern Pilates teachers adapt, modify, or substitute the movements to make them safe and accessible.

Examples:

Roll Over → avoid with neck/spinal issues.

Neck Pull → very demanding on lumbar + hamstrings; often replaced with Roll Up.

Jackknife / Control Balance → risky for osteoporosis, cervical issues.

Rocking → contraindicated with low back pain.

Push Up → modify on knees/wall for shoulder or wrist sensitivity.

### **Energetic/TCM View (optional integration)**

**Each move stimulates Qi flow along key meridians.**

Movements connect to the Five Elements:



Wood: expansion, rotation, hip mobility.



Fire: chest lifts, heart openers, stamina.



Earth: centering, nourishing, steady holds.



Metal: precision, breath, clearing.

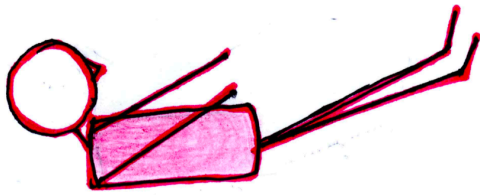


Water: spinal waves, hamstring length, conserving energy.

### **Modern Use**

- Core 34 is the foundation of Pilates training, but often broken down into levels (Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced).
- Contemporary Pilates integrates props, modifications, and anatomical knowledge to make the work safe and effective for all bodies.
- In fusion styles (like your Prana Pilates), classical moves are taught with TCM awareness, sequencing flexibility, and accessibility.

## 1. The Hundred



### Purpose

- Warms up the body and increases circulation
- Improves lung capacity and breath coordination
- Activates the core and integrates breath with movement

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, knees bent in tabletop
- Arms long by sides, spine in neutral

### Execution

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale, curl head, neck, shoulders off mat, keep your chin tucked toward your chest
- Extend legs to high diagonal (knees straight or bent to modify)
- Reach arms long, hover above mat, begin vigorous pumps
- Inhale for 5 counts, exhale for 5 counts, repeat 10 cycles (100 pumps)

### Breath

- Inhale through nose, expand ribs laterally
- Exhale through pursed lips, deepen core engagement

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Anchor into your powerhouse with each exhale
- Radiate energy from your core through your torso as arms pump your prana

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck strain → keep head on mat
- Lower back sensitivity → bend knees, lift your legs higher, keep one leg on the floor, reduce the arm pumps



Wood: Arm pumps broaden lateral ribs; tone outer lines for poised “spring.”



Fire: Breath-driven heat; heart/lung vitality; chest buoyant.



Earth: Deep powerhouse bracing; stable pelvis = safe container.

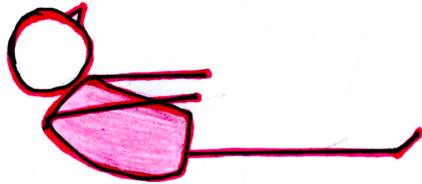


Metal: 5–5 breath counts refine rhythm; purge stale air.



Water: Legs at “working level” protect low back/BL line; conserve energy wisely.

## 2. The Roll Up



### Purpose

- Mobilizes the spine through articulation
- Strengthens abdominals
- Lengthens hamstrings

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, legs long, arms overhead
- Draw ribs down, spine in neutral

### Execution

- Inhale, bring arms to ceiling
- Exhale, curl head, bring your chin to your chest, keep your shoulders wide
- Roll forward toward toes with spinal articulation for 3 pulses
- Inhale pause, exhale roll down vertebra by vertebra

### Breath

- Inhale arms lift, spine lengthens
- Exhale to articulate through spine

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Unfurl spine like a string of pearls
- Awaken each vertebra as energy flows along central axis

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Tight hamstrings → bend knees slightly
- Limited spinal mobility → half roll-back, hold your thighs



Wood: Smooth spinal “growth” from root to crown; supple start to flexion.



Fire: Courage to meet sticky spots with steady exhale.



Earth: Segmental control nourishes core integrity.

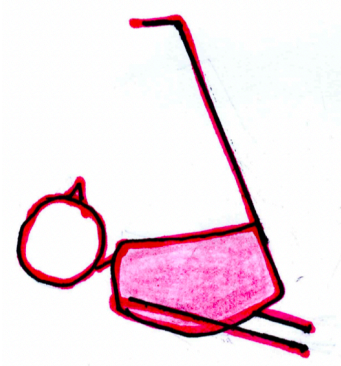


Metal: Long exhale articulates/“lets go” one vertebra at a time.



Water: Hamstring length (bladder meridian) + deep core (kidney meridian) support safe folding.

### 3. The Roll Over



#### Purpose

- Strengthens core and back body
- Lengthens hamstrings
- Controls inversion transitions

#### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, legs together toward ceiling, arms long by your side

#### Execution

- Inhale, lower legs to 45°
- Exhale, roll spine off mat bringing legs overhead parallel to floor
- Inhale, open legs shoulder-width
- Exhale, roll spine down slowly, lengthening through back body
- Bring legs together and repeat

#### Breath

- Exhale to roll up and over
- Inhale to open
- Exhale to articulate down

#### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Anchor through shoulders and arms
- Wave spine with smooth, controlled energy

#### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Avoid with neck issues, osteoporosis, or spinal injury
- Adaptation: reverse curl with smaller range
- Lift legs only to 90°, keep hips grounded, hands under sacrum.



Wood: Controlled arcs cultivate side-body intelligence.



Fire: Inversion confidence; bright focus without strain.



Earth: Heavy shoulders/arms = rooted container for lift/return.

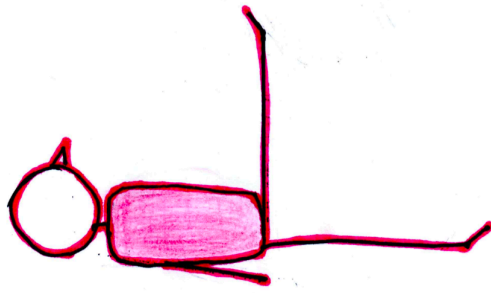


Metal: Smooth breath pacing to regulate intensity.



Water: Bladder channel lengthening; replenishes reserves when done mindfully.

#### 4. One Leg Circle (Single Leg Circles)



##### Purpose

- Increases hip mobility
- Stabilizes pelvis
- Engages core for control

##### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, one leg extended on mat
- Opposite leg lifted toward ceiling, arms by sides

##### Execution

- Inhale, sweep raised leg across midline
- Exhale, circle it down, around, back to start
- Maintain pelvis stability, your powerhouse engaged
- 5–8 circles each way, switch legs

##### Breath

- Inhale start circle, exhale complete

##### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Root through grounded leg
- Draw smooth, radiant circles from the hip socket

##### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Tight hamstrings → slight bend of the working leg
- Low back strain → smaller circle, bend the bottom leg with foot on the floor
- Take your arms wider for stability



Wood: Hip circumduction frees GB track; rotation readiness.



Fire: Steady sternum; spirited yet calm.



Earth: Pelvis anchors—true centration.

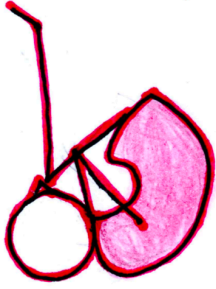


Metal: Clean circles refine control; release excess effort.



Water: Flowing with easeful motion.

## 5. Rolling Back (Rolling Like a Ball)



### Purpose

- Massages spine
- Builds core strength
- Enhances balance and rhythm

### Prep Set-up

- Sit near the front of your mat, knees hugged into chest
- Hands around shins, feet lifted off mat

### Execution

- Inhale, roll back onto shoulders
- Exhale, roll forward to balance without touching feet down
- Maintain rounded spine and steady rhythm

### Breath

- Inhale back, exhale forward

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Stay buoyant, compact like a ball
- Allow breath to guide the rocking motion

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck injury → avoid
- Balance challenges → hold behind thighs
- Practice rocking only, do a smaller curve.



Wood: Elastic rebound; playful adaptability.



Fire: Joyful rock-and-roll awakens spirit.



Earth: Compact shape—self-held, soothed nervous system.



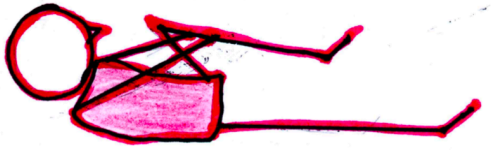
Metal: Even inhale/exhale times the rhythm.



Water: Nourishing spinal massage; parasympathetic “wash.”



## 6. Single Leg Stretch



### Purpose

- Build core endurance
- Increase hip mobility
- Coordinate limb movement with breath

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, curl head/shoulders up
- Right knee hugged in, left leg extended

### Execution

- Switch legs dynamically
- Pull one knee in while the other extends
- Keep pelvis stable and your powerhouse engaged

### Breath

- Inhale one leg in, exhale switch

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lengthen each extended leg toward infinity
- Stabilize from the core as limbs flow freely

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck strain → support head with one hand or keep your head on the floor
- Back strain → keep legs higher, move slower



Wood: Alternating reach organizes diagonal lines/spirals.



Fire: Tempo elevates heat; bright, focused gaze.



Earth: Pelvis quiet—core feeds limbs.

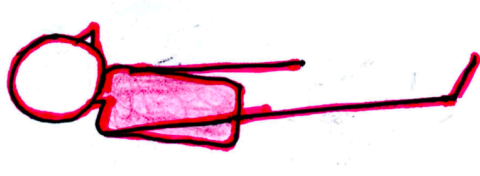


Metal: Breath cues each switch; precision over speed.



Water: Leg height respects lumbar; conserve essence.

## 7. Double Leg Stretch



### Purpose

- Strengthens the abdominals
- Coordinates arms and legs with breath
- Maintains spinal stability

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, knees hugged in
- Curl head and shoulders up, hands on shins

### Execution

- Inhale, extend arms overhead and legs to diagonal
- Exhale, circle arms around, hug knees back in (or keep arms reaching forward or on floor)

### Breath

- Inhale lengthen, exhale return

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Expand like a star, then draw energy back to center
- Maintain a strong, steady your powerhouse

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Low back strain → keep legs higher
- Neck discomfort → rest head on mat
- Shorten arm/leg reach, keep your head down, you can also do one leg at a time.



Wood: Expand/return teaches spacious growth without collapse.



Fire: Starburst extension lifts mood/energy.



Earth: Hug-to-center re-nourishes stability.



Metal: Circle arms to “sweep out” tension; conscious exhales.



Water: Work at sustainable angle; protect kidney & bladder line.

## 8. Spine Stretch Forward



### Purpose

- Articulates the spine
- Lengthens hamstrings
- Expands the breath capacity

### Prep Set-up

- Sit tall, legs extended wider than hips
- Arms forward, parallel to floor

### Execution

- Inhale lift spine tall
- Exhale, articulate forward one vertebra at a time

### Breath

- Inhale lengthen, exhale deepen stretch

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Create space between vertebrae
- Reach energy forward while grounding sit bones

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Tight hamstrings → bend knees or sit on cushion
- Bring your hands to your shins, rather than the floor



Wood: Opens side-waist to reach forward freely.



Fire: Soft heart as you bow; no strain.



Earth: Tall-to-rounded sequencing feeds midline strength.



Metal: Exhale to empty—let the back body widen.



Water: Hamstring length + kidney back-body support.

## 9. Open Leg Rocker



### Purpose

- Enhances balance
- Articulates spine
- Develops core control

### Prep Set-up

- Sit, knees bent, hold ankles
- Lift legs to V-shape, feet shoulder-width

### Execution

- Inhale, roll back onto shoulders
- Exhale, roll forward to balance

### Breath

- Inhale roll back, exhale return

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lift from core, maintaining shape through movement
- Flow with rhythm and precision

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Tight hamstrings → hold thighs instead of ankles, keep knees bent
- Practice balance only

🪵 Wood: V-shape cultivates suppleness and lateral line length.

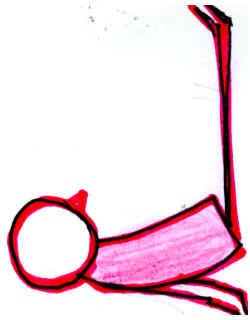
🔥 Fire: Playful lift; spirited balance.

🌍 Earth: Rock from your center—steady base.

👉 Metal: Breath organizes tempo; neat landings.

🌊 Water: Soothing spinal wave; regulate range to feel safe.

## 10. Corkscrew



### Purpose

- Strengthens obliques
- Mobilizes spine
- Improves hip mobility

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, legs together toward ceiling
- Arms long by sides

### Execution

- Inhale, circle legs to one side
- Lower down, sweep around, return to center
- Reverse direction

### Breath

- Inhale across, exhale complete circle

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Anchor shoulders and pelvis as legs trace smooth arcs

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Back strain → reduce circle size, bend knees
- Keep your pelvis stable (skip the lift)
- 



Wood: Spiral control through obliques; rotates GB/LV lines.



Fire: Upright chest as legs arc—calm power.



Earth: Shoulder/pelvic anchors; core manages motion.

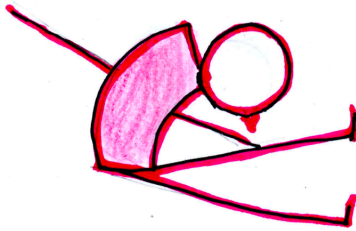


Metal: Crisp inhale/exhale at compass points.



Water: Respect depth to guard low back.

## 11. Saw



### Purpose

- Increases spinal rotation
- Stretches hamstrings
- Expands breath

### Prep Set-up

- Sit tall, legs wide, arms out to sides

### Execution

- Inhale twist, exhale reach over one leg, opposite arm back
- Pulse 2–3 times, return center, switch sides

### Breath

- Inhale twist, exhale fold

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Twist from waist, lengthen through crown and fingertips

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Tight hamstrings → bend knees slightly
- bend knees / sit on block / smaller twist.



Wood: Twisting reach frees side seams; vision/decision energy.



Fire: Bright chest without forcing; uplifted crown.



Earth: Rooted sit bones—stable base to explore.

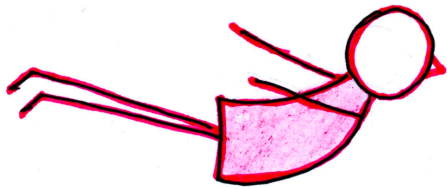


Metal: Exhale “saws” through tension; clears old grief.



Water: Hamstring-friendly fold; moisten the nervous system.

## 12. Swan



### Purpose

- Strengthens spinal extensors
- Opens chest and shoulders
- Improves spinal mobility

### Prep Set-up

- Lie prone, hands under shoulders or forehead
- Legs extended long, tops of feet on mat

### Execution

- Inhale, press pubic bone into mat, lift chest and extend spine
- Exhale, lower with control
- Option: Swan Dive — rock forward and back alternating chest and leg lifts

### Breath

- Inhale rise, exhale lower

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lengthen upward through crown as chest opens
- Keep lower body grounded

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Low back injury → keep small range & rock gently
- Only lift head/chest, keep hands down



Wood: Long side body; free shoulders.



Fire: Heart opening; joy and confidence.



Earth: Pubic bone anchor; supportive belly.

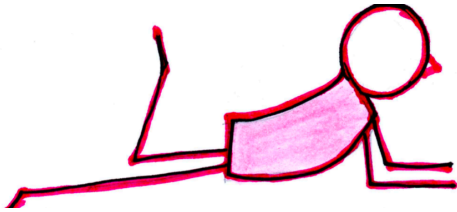


Metal: Inhale into back ribs; spacious lungs.



Water: Gentle range protects lumbar/kidneys.

### 13. Single Leg Kick



#### Purpose

- Strengthens hamstrings and glutes
- Opens chest and shoulders
- Engages spinal extensors

#### Prep Set-up

- Lie prone on forearms, chest lifted in sphinx position

#### Execution

- Kick heel toward seat twice (flex, then point)
- Alternate legs, maintain lifted chest

#### Breath

- Inhale for two kicks, exhale switch

#### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lift through sternum, shoulders away from ears

#### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Knee discomfort → smaller range of motion & slower kicks
- Widen elbows, to lower torso toward the floor



Wood: Hip extension glides; supple front/side lines.



Fire: Proud sternum; alert energy.



Earth: Sphinx base stabilizes; core lifts.



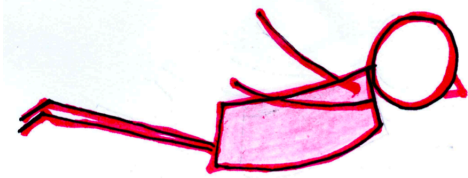
Metal: Two-beat breath pattern cleans rhythm.



Water: Mod kicks safeguard knees/low back.



## 14. Double Leg Kick



### Purpose

- Opens chest and shoulders
- Strengthens spinal extensors and hamstrings

### Prep Set-up

- Lie prone, head turned to side, hands clasped behind back

### Execution

- Kick heels to seat three times
- Inhale, lift chest and extend arms back
- Exhale, lower and turn head opposite side

### Breath

- Inhale extend, exhale release

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Draw shoulder blades together, lift heart high

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Shoulder restrictions → keep arms by sides
- Reduce to one leg, place a pillow under your chest & lower your arms



Wood: Alternating head turn nourishes lateral neck/GB.



Fire: Chest expansion = warm, open affect.



Earth: Strong belly against mat; supported backbend.

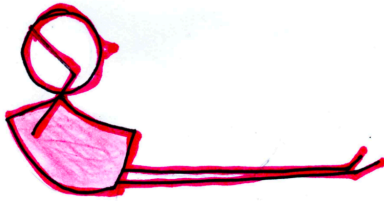


Metal: Smooth inhale to lengthen; exhale to soften.



Water: Mindful range conserves energy.

## 15. Neck Pull



### Purpose

- Strengthens abdominals
- Mobilizes spine
- Stretches hamstrings

### Prep Set-up

- Sit tall, legs long, hands behind head
- Elbows wide

### Execution

- Exhale, roll back with control
- Inhale, return to upright, hinge forward slightly
- Stack spine back up

### Breath

- Inhale lengthen, exhale roll

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lift before folding, maintaining spinal length

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck issues → cross arms over chest
- Bring your hands behind thighs instead
- Partial roll back with your knees bent



Wood: Length through side waist; poised rotation potential.



Fire: Meet intensity with calm courage.



Earth: Centered hinge/roll = trustworthy structure.

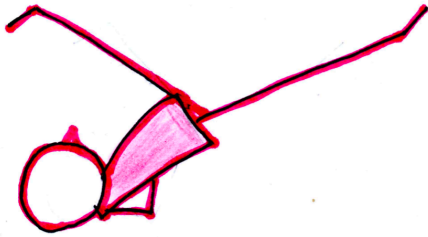


Metal: Exhale articulates; precise hand position.



Water: Hamstring-wise setup; sustainable reps.

## 16. Scissors (Single Straight Leg Stretch)



### Purpose

- Stretches hamstrings
- Strengthens core
- Improves leg control

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, legs extended toward ceiling
- Head and shoulders curled up

### Execution

- Hold one leg, lower the other toward mat
- Switch legs with control

### Breath

- Inhale switch, exhale switch

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lengthens both legs equally from core

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Tight hamstrings → hold behind thighs
- Support your pelvis with hands, bend your knees and take a smaller range of motion



Wood: Alternating reach organizes spiral slings.



Fire: Alert, bright focus; no neck strain.



Earth: Pelvic stillness—deep belly.

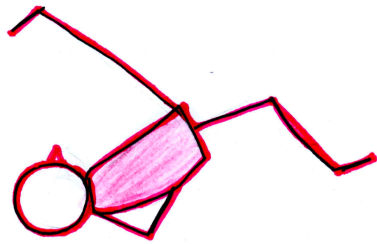


Metal: Even breath = even tempo; release jaw.



Water: Ebb and flow like the ocean's waves.

## 17. Bicycle



### Purpose

- Strengthens core
- Mobilizes hips
- Coordinates movement

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, legs lifted
- Head and shoulders curled up

### Execution

- Pedal legs in controlled cycling motion

### Breath

- Steady rhythmic breathing

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Control movement from your powerhouse, not momentum

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Hip/knee issues → smaller range of motion, keep knees bent & pelvis stable



Wood: Hip circles mobilize paths of growth/decision.



Fire: Rhythmic play fuels vitality.



Earth: Lumbo-pelvic control underpins motion.

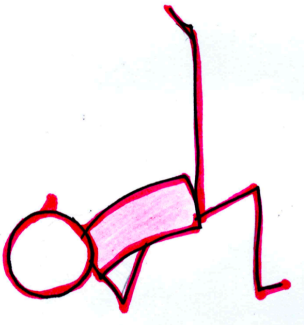


Metal: Steady cadence with smooth exhales.



Water: Gentle range protects joints and back line.

## 18. Shoulder Bridge



### Purpose

- Strengthens glutes, hamstrings, and spinal extensors
- Mobilizes spine
- Opens chest

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, knees bent, feet hip-width apart
- Arms by sides, palms down

### Execution

- Inhale, press into feet, lift hips to bridge
- Optional: Extend one leg while keeping hips level
- Exhale, roll spine down

### Breath

- Inhale lift, exhale articulate down

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lengthen knees away from hips
- Engage inner thighs

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Avoid if acute low back pain
- Neck issues → keep the lift small
- Keep your arms pressing down / one leg march (instead of extension).



Wood: Lengthen knees forward; free hip flexors.



Fire: Uplifted sternum; bright but not braced.



Earth: Feet root; sequential roll nourishes core.

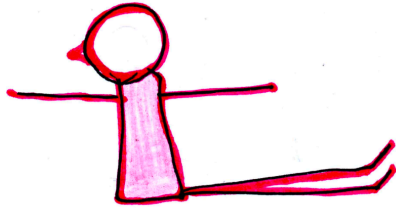


Metal: Exhale to melt down; refine alignment.



Water: Create length along back body; soothe lumbar.

## 19. Spine Twist



### Purpose

- Improves spinal rotation
- Strengthens obliques
- Enhances posture

### Prep Set-up

- Sit tall, legs extended and together
- Arms out to sides, shoulder height

### Execution

- Inhale prepare
- Exhale, twist from waist, pulse twice
- Inhale return to center

### Breath

- Inhale center, exhale twist

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Keep hips anchored
- Lift through crown

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Lower back injury → smaller rotation, bend knees / lower your arms
- Reduce twist range



Wood: Clear, decisive rotation from waist.



Fire: Buoyant ribs without flaring.



Earth: Sit-bone rooting = safe twist.

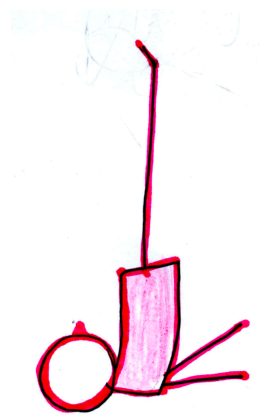


Metal: Pulse exhales to “polish” range, not force it.



Water: Gentle tempo for nervous system ease.

## 20. Jack Knife



### Purpose

- Strengthens abdominals and hip flexors
- Improves spinal articulation
- Challenge control and balance

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, arms by sides
- Legs extended to 45°

### Execution

- Inhale, lift legs overhead to rollover position
- Exhale, lift legs vertically
- Inhale, lower with control

### Breath

- Inhale lift, exhale lower

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Reach legs to ceiling, lengthen through spine

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck/spinal issues or pain → avoid overhead position
- Take legs only to 90°, support with arms & skip the lift



Wood: Strong lateral support to lift/stack legs.



Fire: Concentrated, spark-like ascent.



Earth: Arm/shoulder grounding; core steadies descent.

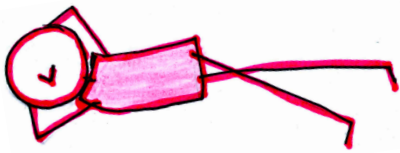


Metal: Breath gates each phase; clean control.



Water: Protect neck/low back; conserve essence.

## 21. Side Kick



### Purpose

- Strengthens hips and outer thighs
- Improves hip mobility
- Enhances core stability

### Prep Set-up

- Lie on side, bottom arm extended or supporting head
- Top hand in front for balance

### Execution

- Swing top leg forward and back with control
- Maintain torso stability

### Breath

- Inhale forward, exhale back

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lengthens through both legs
- Keeps hips stacked - ergo stabilizing the pelvis

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Hip injury or pain → smaller range of motion
- Bend the bottom leg for more stability, smaller kicks, bring your top hand to the floor for additional support



Wood: Hip ab/adduction frees GB track; adaptability.



Fire: Crisp, lively leg without hard bracing.



Earth: Stacked pelvis—organized trunk.



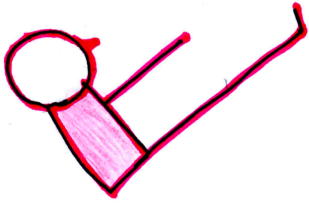
Metal: Inhale forward/exhale back to “clear” edges.



Water: Range set by lumbar safety; smooth, fluid effort.



## 22. Teaser



### Purpose

- Strengthens abdominals and hip flexors
- Improves balance and coordination
- Lengthens spine

### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, legs long, arms overhead

### Execution

- Inhale, roll up to V-sit with legs lifted
- Arms reach parallel to legs
- Exhale, roll down with control

### Breath

- Inhale lift, exhale lower

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lift through crown, anchor low belly

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Low back injury → keep knees bent
- Hold back of thighs, only do a partial roll up
- You can also keep your feet on the floor



Wood: Long limbs from supple side waist.



Fire: Joyful lift; spark of confidence.



Earth: Scoop + sit-bone balance—self-held center.

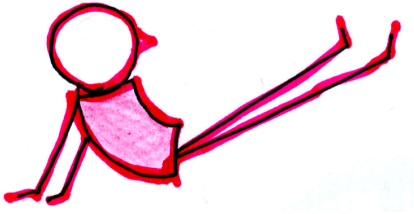


Metal: Breath times lift/lower; precise angles.



Water: Mod with bent knees to preserve reserves.

### 23. Hip Twist with Arms Back



#### Purpose

- Strengthens obliques
- Improves spinal rotation
- Challenges balance

#### Prep Set-up

- Sit tall, legs extended forward and together
- Arms out to sides, shoulder height

#### Execution

- Circle both legs together in small controlled motion
- Reverse direction

#### Breath

- Inhale prepare, exhale move

#### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Anchor through sitting bones
- Keep chest open

#### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Hip or low back injury → take smaller movements
- Bent your knees, keep your arms down & make smaller circles



Wood: Pelvic circles refine rotational freedom.



Fire: Open chest, steady gaze.



Earth: Hands/arms create grounded frame.

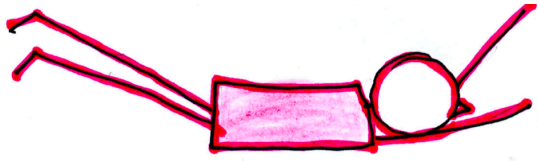


Metal: Smooth exhale organizes circle path.



Water: Small, sustainable range keeps back safe.

## 24. Swimming



### Purpose

- Strengthens back extensors, glutes, and shoulders
- Improves coordination

### Prep Set-up

- Lie **prone**, arms and legs extended

### Execution

- Lift opposite arm and leg, alternate rapidly like swimming strokes

### Breath

- Inhale 5 counts, exhale 5 counts

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lengthen through fingertips and toes

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Low back injury → smaller lift
- Lift opposite arm & leg only, move slower & lift smaller



Wood: Contralateral reach nourishes lateral lines.



Fire: Light, lively, heart-bright movement.



Earth: Belly lifts from floor; anchored pelvis.

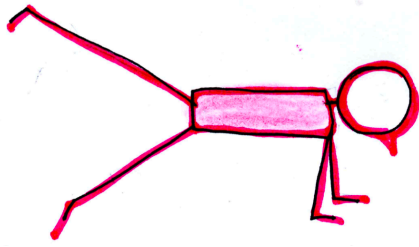


Metal: 5–5 breath pumps lungs clean.



Water: Swimming through with ease and grace.

## 25. Leg Pull Front



### Purpose

- Strengthens core, arms, and legs
- Improves shoulder stability

### Prep Set-up

- Start in plank position, hands under shoulders

### Execution

- Lift one leg toward ceiling, switch legs with control

### Breath

- Inhale prepare, exhale lift

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Keep hips level, draw belly in

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Wrist/shoulder injury → modify on forearms
- Do on knees (plank on all fours), take smaller kicks.



Wood: Leg reach lengthens side body fascia.



Fire: Plank heat builds will and focus.



Earth: Shoulder girdle + core = stable foundation.

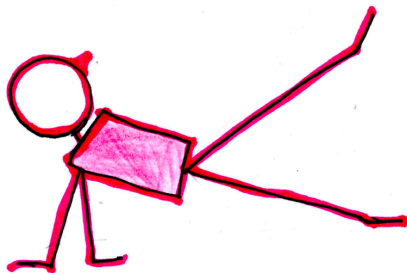


Metal: Exhale firms center; neat transitions.



Water: Choose knee plank when needed; preserve lumbar/kidneys.

## 26. Leg Pull Back



### Purpose

- Strengthens posterior chain
- Open chest and shoulders

### Prep Set-up

- Sit with legs extended, hands behind hips, fingers forward

### Execution

- Lift hips to reverse plank, kick one leg upward, alternate

### Breath

- Inhale lift, exhale kick

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Press through heels, lift sternum

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Wrist/shoulder issues → keep hips down
- Fingertips sideways or forward, keep your hips lower with smaller kicks



Wood: Anterior chain opens; side lines free.



Fire: Chest shines; spirited lift.



Earth: Hands/heels root; posterior chain strengthens.

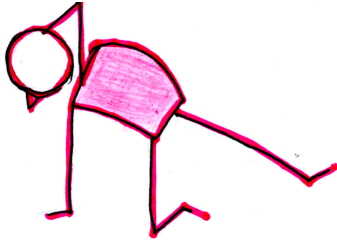


Metal: Even breath stabilizes wrists/shoulders.



Water: Lower hips a touch to guard low back.

## 27. Side Kick Kneeling



### Purpose

- Strengthens hips and core
- Improves balance

### Prep Set-up

- Kneel, one hand on mat under shoulder, opposite leg extended to side

### Execution

- Swing top leg forward and back
- Maintain stability

### Breath

- Inhale forward, exhale back

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lift through side waist

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Knee sensitivity → pad mat
- Bring your bottom hand to a block, take smaller range of motion & lower your hip



Wood: Powerful lateral line; hip freedom with control.



Fire: Energized reach through top arm/leg.



Earth: Grounded kneeling base; oblique support.



Metal: Exhale organizes kicks; precise path.



Water: Pad knee; conserve via smaller range.

## 28. Side Bend



### Purpose

- Strengthens obliques and shoulders
- Stretches side body

### Prep Set-up

- Sit with legs folded to one side, hand on mat under shoulder

### Execution

- Press into hand, lift hips into side plank
- Arc body upward, return with control

### Breath

- Inhale lift, exhale lower

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Reach through top arm and legs

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Shoulder/wrist injury → modify by bringing your top hand to your shoulder
- Do from kneeling, with the option to come down to your bottom elbow, lift smaller



Wood: Arc opens GB channel; spacious side seam.



Fire: Radiant top chest/hand; courageous lift.



Earth: Strong shoulder stack/base hand roots.

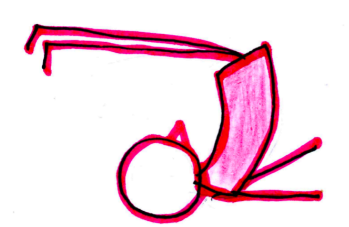


Metal: Smooth exhale to return—release gripping.



Water: Mod to elbow/knees to protect structures.

## 29. Boomerang



### Purpose

- Strengthens core
- Improves coordination and flexibility

### Prep Set-up

- Sit tall, legs crossed, arms by sides

### Execution

- Roll back to teaser, switch leg cross, roll forward, reach arms back and sweep overhead

### Breath

- Flowing inhale/exhale sequence

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Keep movement fluid, control transitions

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Low back issues → reduce range
- You can skip the Teaser, roll like ball, hands stay down.



Wood: Cross/uncross builds nimble adaptability.



Fire: Flow state—playful, bright transitions.



Earth: Core sequencing contains complexity.



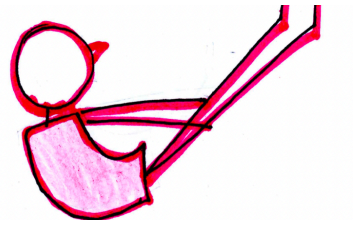
Metal: Breath stitches phases together cleanly.



Water: Reduce range to preserve steadiness.



### 30. Seal



#### Purpose

- Mobilizes spine
- Massages back muscles
- Improves coordination

#### Prep Set-up

- Sit, soles together, hands under legs and clasping ankles

#### Execution

- Clap feet 3 times, roll back, clap 3 times, roll forward to balance

#### Breath

- Inhale roll back, exhale roll forward

#### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Keep chin tucked, spine rounded

#### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck issues → avoid rolling, you can also clap fewer times, hold behind thighs, take smaller rocking motions



Wood: Open hips/outer lines in playful rock.



Fire: Joyful claps—light spirit.



Earth: Rounded shape self-soothes; safe container.

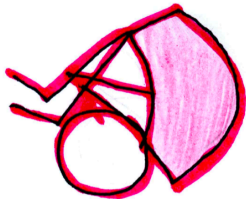


Metal: Inhale back/exhale forward—tidy rhythm.



Water: Gentle spinal massage; calming.

### 31. Crab



#### Purpose

- Mobilizes spine
- Stretches shoulders

#### Prep Set-up

- Sit, cross ankles, hold feet or toes with opposite hands

#### Execution

- Roll back, change cross, roll forward onto knees

#### Breath

- Inhale roll back, exhale forward

#### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Round spine fully, lead with core

#### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck issues → avoid rolling back onto C7
- Knee issues, avoid holding toes and crossing ankles → do a simple rock and roll instead



Wood: Neck/shoulder rotation (gentle) aids lateral freedom.



Fire: Brave but soft—no forcing.



Earth: Compact center manages complex pathway.

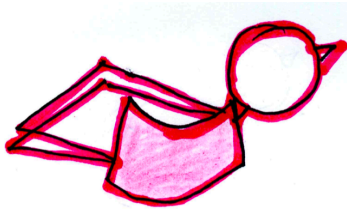


Metal: Slow, precise breath pacing.



Water: Simplify to rocking if cervical/lumbar need care.

## 32. Rocking



### Purpose

- Strengthens back extensors and legs
- Opens chest and shoulders

### Prep Set-up

- Lie prone, hold ankles with hands

### Execution

- Inhale, lift chest and thighs, rock forward and back

### Breath

- Inhale lift, exhale rock

### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Lengthen front body while engaging back

### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Low back issues → smaller lift
- Hold one foot, take a smaller lift with your chest, you can skip the rocking



Wood: Length in quads/hip flexors frees side seams.



Fire: Big heart opener—joy/enthusiasm.



Earth: Belly support prevents hinging at low back.



Metal: Exhale smooths the rock; no strain.



Water: Rocking on the front of the abdomen and flexion in the spine stimulate the water element.

### 33. Control Balance



#### Purpose

- Challenges balance and flexibility
- Strengthens core and back

#### Prep Set-up

- Lie supine, roll over, hold one ankle as other leg lifts

#### Execution

- Switch legs with control

#### Breath

- Steady, controlled

#### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Anchor core, lengthen lifted leg

#### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Neck/spine injury → avoid
- Keep your legs at 90°, keep your hands on your hips, you can skip the balance transfer



Wood: Split-leg alternation refines rotational slings.



Fire: Elevated focus; calm, bright presence.



Earth: Strong shoulder base; true axial length.

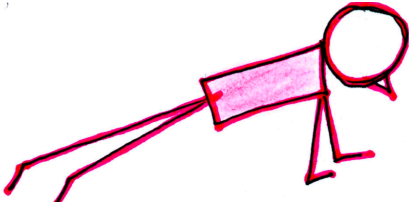


Metal: Methodical breath meters transfers.



Water: Modify to gentle rocking to keep neck and low back safe.

### 34. Push Up



#### Purpose

- Strengthens arms, chest, core
- Improves upper body endurance

#### Prep Set-up

- Stand tall, roll down, walk out to plank

#### Execution

- Perform 3–5 push ups, walk back, roll up

#### Breath

- Inhale lower, exhale lift

#### Awareness & Energetic Alignment

- Keep body in straight line, press through hands

#### Contraindications/Adaptations

- Wrist/shoulder injury → modify on knees
- Hands to the wall, take fewer reps



Wood: Organized lines wrist→waist→heels.



Fire: Determined heat; steady heart.



Earth: Plank integrity; core-first strength.



Metal: Exhale on press—clear and precise.



Water: Wall/knees variation to preserve joints/energy.

# Teacher Script: Core 34

## Opening Centering

"Lie down on your mat, legs extended, arms at your side.

Close your eyes for a moment and notice your breath.

Inhale deeply through your nose, feeling your ribcage expand sideways.

Exhale fully, audibly through your mouth, drawing your navel gently toward your spine, lengthening your lower back into the mat.

Take 3 more releasing breaths, allowing yourself to become present now and here.

All of these Core 34 Pilates Movements connect and activate to each of the elements. As you move through these postures, set your mind on precision, control, and flow. Notice what comes up as your flow through the movements. You are welcome to keep your attention on the physical or move deeper accessing any stuck emotion or stuck energy."

## Introduce Pilates Breath

"Now connect to your Pilates Breath— the foundation of your practice today. In Pilates, we use a lateral breath. Inhale deeply through your nose, letting your ribs expand out to the sides and back like an opening umbrella, while keeping the abdominals gently engaged. Exhale fully through your mouth through closed teeth and pursed lips as if you are breathing through a filter, while you draw your navel in and up toward the spine, feeling the ribs knit together, the waist narrow and your low back imprint into your mat. Keep this breath going for the entire class, rest when you need with releasing breaths whenever you feel you need to or want to.

This breath not only supports and protects the spine, but also helps you move with precision, control, and flow. Let each inhale prepare your body for movement, and each exhale power your action, guiding you from your center."

## 1. The Hundred

"Inhale, bring both knees to tabletop, curl your head, neck, and shoulders up. Extend your legs to your working level.

Arms reach long by your sides, begin pumping vigorously.

Inhale for 5 pumps — exhale for 5 pumps. Keep your breath steady, ribs drawing in, spine anchored.

Keep it going.

**Poetic Cue:** *Ignite your inner Fire, warm your body with steady breath. The fire element allows us to experience more joy, more love & more enjoyment of life.*

**Rest:** Hug your knees into your chest, rock side to side. One full breath in, one slow breath out.

## **2. The Roll Up**

"Legs together, arms overhead.

Inhale — arms sweep to the ceiling, chin nods.

Exhale — scoop your belly, roll up one vertebra at a time.

Inhale at the top, lengthen the spine.

Exhale — roll down slowly, keeping heels grounded."

Repeat.

**Poetic Cue:** *Flow like Water, spine unfurling in waves. The Water Element helps us move through challenges with ease and grace - bring ease and grace into your practice now. Connect to your Pilates Breath - flow.*

## **3. The Roll Over (with Legs Spread)**

"Take your arms long by your sides, and your legs to the ceiling.

Inhale — begin to lift the hips.

Exhale — roll overhead until legs are parallel to the mat, then open legs hip-width.

Inhale — begin to roll down, closing legs as they reach the ceiling.

Reverse after 3 reps."

**Poetic Cue:** *Root in Earth's stability as you lift and lower with control. The Earth element helps us soothe any worry. Kidneys are part of the earth element, allow this motion to massage your kidneys, reminding you that everything is ok.*

**Rest:** Hug your knees into your chest - take 2 deep releasing breaths.

## **4. One Leg Circle**

"Extend your right leg toward ceiling, let your left leg be long on your mat.

Inhale — cross your leg over your body.

Exhale — sweep it down, around, and up.

Keep your hips still and your pelvis stable, keep your low back connected to your mat.

Take 3 circles in one direction, and 3 circles in the other direction, and then switch legs."

**Poetic Cue:** *Bring in the smooth flowing quality of the air, which belongs to the metal element. Metal helps us move through grief and connect to courage.*

### **5. Rolling Back (Rolling Like a Ball)**

“Come to seated, hug your knees into your chest, hands on shins, heels close to your seat.

Inhale — roll back to your shoulders.

Exhale — roll forward to balance.

Keep your head tucked in, keep your shape tight.”

Do 6 – 8 reps.

**Poetic Cue:** *Return to your core, like a seed held by the Earth. Connect to the calming energy of the earth, feel your pilates breath move through your body.*

### **6. One Leg Stretch**

“Lie back, curl up toward your right knee in as you keep your left leg long.

Inhale — switch legs.

Exhale — switch again.

Keep your pelvis still and breath continuous.”

**Poetic Cue:** *Feel the heat build in your body as you connect to your Fire Element. Burn away any blockages that keep you from your love and your joy.*

### **7. Double Leg Stretch**

“From seated, with your knees bent, bring your hands to your shins.

Inhale — arms reach overhead, legs extend.

Exhale — circle arms, hug knees back in.

Maintain lift of your upper body.”

**Poetic Cue:** *Gather and release, like the tide’s eternal Water cycle - flow, surrender.*

Rest: Lie back, arms overhead, one deep cleansing breath.

### **8. Spine Stretch Forward**

“Sit tall, with your legs straight out and wider than your hips, flex your feet.

Inhale — grow taller.

Exhale — scoop your belly, and reach your crown toward toes.

Inhale — restack your spine from tailbone up.”

Repeat 4–5 times.



**Poetic Cue:** *Bow to the Earth, offering your breath as gratitude. Inhale to re-align.*

## **9. Open Leg Rocker**

"Balance on your sit bones, legs open to a V, hold your ankles.

Inhale — roll back to your shoulders.

Exhale — roll up to balance.

Keep your shape steady, your movement smooth and your eyes forward."

**Poetic Cue:** *Balance like a tree swaying in Wind yet rooted deep. Feel connected to your Wood Element - balanced and strong, yet still flexible.*

## **10. Corkscrew**

"Lie back, and lift your legs to the ceiling.

Inhale — circle your legs to the right, down, to the left, and back up.

Exhale — reverse.

Keep your movement from waist down."

**Poetic Cue:** *Spiral like Water flowing around stones - never stopping.*

## **11. The Saw**

"Sit tall with your legs wide, and your arms out.

Inhale — twist from your waist.

Exhale — reach your front arm toward your little toe, while keeping your back arm long.

Inhale — rise up, exhale — twist the other way."

**Poetic Cue:** *Twist and reach, cutting through any limits or blocks - like the wind blowing through leaves.*

## **12. Swan Dive**

"Lie prone with your hands under your shoulders.

Inhale — lift your head, chest, and ribs.

Exhale — rock forward, lift your legs lift, then rock back to chest lift.

Repeat with flowing breath."

**Poetic Cue:** *Soar like the spark of a Fire carried upward. Feel your back body strength. Feel the heat building - connect to your love and your joy, feel the enjoyment of life now here, able to move your beautiful body.*

### **13. Single Leg Kick**

"Prop onto your forearms, lift your chest.

Inhale — kick your right heel toward your seat twice.

Exhale — switch.

Keep your shoulders wide, and your abdominals lifted."

**Poetic Cue:** *Kick with the power of Earth's grounded strength.*

### **14. Double Leg Kick**

"Lie prone, one cheek down, hands clasped behind back.

As you Inhale — kick your heels to your seat three times.

Exhale — extend legs and arms, lift chest, turn head other side."

**Poetic Cue:** *Open your heart like Water meeting the shore.*

Rest: Take advasana - forehead on hands, take one slow releasing breath.

### **15. Neck Pull**

"Bring your hands behind your head, your elbows wide.

Inhale — roll up tall.

Exhale — hinge slightly, then roll down with control.

Keep your ribs drawing in."

**Poetic Cue:** *Rise and bow, in reverence to you - for the amazing human that you are.*

### **16. Scissors**

"Lift your hips overhead and bring your hands to your back.

Inhale and lower one leg toward mat.

Exhale — switch legs.

Keep your torso stable."

**Poetic Cue:** *Slice through space like Wind's swift current.*

### **17. Bicycle**

"From Scissors, begin cycling your legs forward, then reverse.

Breathe naturally, keep lift through spine."

**Poetic Cue:** *Pedal through time like Water's endless journey.*

## 18. Shoulder Bridge

"Lie down with your feet hip-width apart.

Inhale — lift your hips.

Exhale — extend your right leg to the ceiling, lower and lift it 3 times.

Switch legs, as you keep your hips level."

**Poetic Cue:** *Lift like a mountain emerging from the Earth. Feel grounded, feel strong, feel capable.*

## 19. Spine Twist

"Sit tall, legs together, arms out.

Inhale — twist from waist, pulse twice.

Exhale — center, inhale twist other way."

**Poetic Cue:** *Lift like a mountain emerging from the Earth.*

## 20. Jack Knife

"Lay down and bring your legs toward the ceiling.

Inhale — lift hips and legs overhead.

Exhale — roll down with control."

**Poetic Cue:** *Feel the fire in your core, burn baby burn - let any limits you've placed on yourself dissolve with each exhale - creating more space for more love and move joy.*

## 21. Side Kick

"Lay on your left side, bring your right leg to hip height.

Inhale — swing your leg forward.

Exhale — swing your leg back.

Do 8 kicks forward and 8 kicks back

Next do small up/down lifts, then small circles."

**Poetic Cue:** *Move like the waves of the ocean — fluid yet powerful.*

## **22. Teaser**

"From laying down exhale to empty, as you inhale — roll up into a V balance.

Exhale — roll down with control.

Repeat, keeping legs steady."

**Poetic Cue:** *Float like a leaf balancing on Water.*

## **23. Hip Twist with Arms Back**

"Sit tall with your legs extended and your arms behind you to support some of your body weight.

Inhale — twist to one side.

Exhale — circle arms and torso down and around, return to center."

**Poetic Cue:** *Circle like Wind spiraling through open space.*

## **24. Swimming**

"Lie prone with your arms and legs extended.

Inhale — lift your opposite arm and opposite leg.

Exhale — switch rapidly, keep spine long."

**Poetic Cue:** *Swim through life with Water's vitality, never stopping, always flowing.*

## **25. Leg Pull Front**

"From Plank position, inhale — lift one leg.

Exhale — point and flex foot.

Switch legs."

**Poetic Cue:** *Stand firm like Earth, extend like Wind.*

## **26. Leg Pull Back**

"Reverse your plank.

Inhale — lift one leg, point and flex.

Switch legs, keep hips high."

**Poetic Cue:** *Shine upward with Fire's light.*

## **27. Side Kick Kneeling**

“Kneel on your left knee with your left hand rooted into earth and your right arm up, lift your top leg to hip height.

Inhale — kick your leg forward, as you exhale — kick back.

X5

**Poetic Cue:** *Sweep through space like Wind over grass.*

## **28. Side Bend**

"Sit on your left side with your legs stacked, root your right hand into the earth.

Inhale — lift your hips into side plank, bring your right arm overhead.

Exhale — lower with control.”

x4

**Poetic Cue:** *Arc like a wave’s crest in Water.*

## **29. Boomerang**

“Sit with your legs extended and your ankles crossed.

Roll back, with your hands interlaced and stretched out - switch cross, roll into teaser, arms sweep back, fold forward.

Flow with your breath."

**Poetic Cue:** *Return to your center, then expand outward like the tides.*

## **30. Seal**

“Sit with the soles of feet together and your hands under ankles.

Clap your feet 3 times.

Inhale — roll back, clap 3 times.

Exhale — roll forward, clap again."

**Poetic Cue:** *Playful as Water splashing over rocks.*

## **31. Crab**

“Kneel with your forehead on the floor, with your ankles crossed, take opposite peace fingers to opposite big toes - hold your toes.

Inhale — roll over your feet and back to your shoulders.

Exhale — roll forward and up on to your knees. This is extremely challenging for your knees - please modify as needed.

**Poetic Cue:** Dive deep and resurface like Ocean's rhythm.

### **32. Rocking - Set up is Danurasana from yoga.**

"Lie prone, hold your ankles. Point or flex your feet - whatever feels best on your knees.

Inhale — lift your chest and thighs.

Exhale — rock forward and back."

**Poetic Cue:** *Radiate joy like Fire warming the body.*

### **33. Control Balance**

"Lift your hips overhead, hold your right ankle, extend your left leg toward the ceiling.

Switch legs with control, breathing steadily."

**Poetic Cue:** *Balance in stillness like Earth's unwavering grounded energy - always available for you to connect to - as you flow through this movement - connect to the loving energy of mother earth - feel grounded, connected, guided and protected.*

**Rest:** Hug your knees into your chest. Rock up and down your spine. Roll over your feet and into your push up position for your final movement.

### **34. Push Up**

"Take your plank pose - knees up or down.

Inhale - take your low plank, exhale push up.

Continue for one minute - take a child's pose when you need and rejoin."

**Poetic Cue:** *Channel Fire's determination into strength.*

## **Prana Pilates Integration**

Joseph Pilates made the final movement of his 34 movement sequence the push-up as he wanted the class to finish strong. As an honor of this tradition, we will close in seated position for a 3 minute Kapalabhati breath practice, and we always do 3 x 1 minute push-ups in each sequence.