



the

TRIUMPHANT *TEASER!*

Pilates master Jennifer Kries offers up priceless tips that will help you tackle the Teaser, no matter your level.

by Jennifer Kries

Those of us who have practiced Pilates for many years know that to execute a beautifully controlled, elevated Teaser, is quite an achievement. Years ago, when I was a young apprentice and professional ballet dancer at Drago's Gym in NYC, I used to watch the more seasoned apprentices attempting the exercise in Romana Kryzanowska's mat classes. Of course, it comes at the end, after your powerhouse is already on fire, so it requires remarkable focus, breath and control.

I noticed that those who were the most successful at peeling their bodies off the mat so seamlessly were the very same who made it look easy. They weren't stressed when they were doing it. They clearly connected to their breath, and made the decision to apply their strength, but in a metered way, the way Joe wanted movements to be performed (with "economy," one of his mantras). The other thing I realized, especially when it was my turn to attempt it, was that without oppositional force—literally being able

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to reach energetically in opposite directions, one did not have a hope in hell of achieving this feat gracefully on the journey up to the summit. I discovered that there was a magic and beauty to this perfect synthesis of opposites, the invisible laws of physics at work, and a resultant symmetry. I had to dance with tension and learn to harness it instead of being at its mercy!

The Teaser is the quintessential Pilates exercise. Not only does it help you to create unmatched core strength, long, lean legs and a beautifully sculpted upper body, but perhaps more than with any other exercise in the syllabus, we get to experience the most essential and dynamic concepts that I always teach in my trainings: the “principle of opposition” and “effortless effort.” In order to achieve true strength and real integrity in movement, you need to know how to literally “light up” your body in equal and diametrically opposed directions with intention, breath and energy. And when you engage your muscles with the intention to reach beyond your limits while connecting consciously with your breath, you come to realize that you can accomplish so much more with less effort. With conscious focus and laser-beam engagement, your limbs become lighter as your core becomes stronger and you literally “float up” to your toes rather than grunting or groaning to get there.

In this workout, I’ve highlighted several variations of the Teaser on different apparatus for everyone, from the rank beginner to the most seasoned professional. My hope is that they’ll inspire and motivate you by demonstrating how the Teaser not only strengthens the body, but your inner resolve, will and determination, resulting in a newfound feeling of empowerment. You can choose 2–3 exercises to weave into your sessions, or if you’re feeling especially ambitious, try them all in one session—just promise me that you’ll balance it all with some serious abdominal stretches afterward.

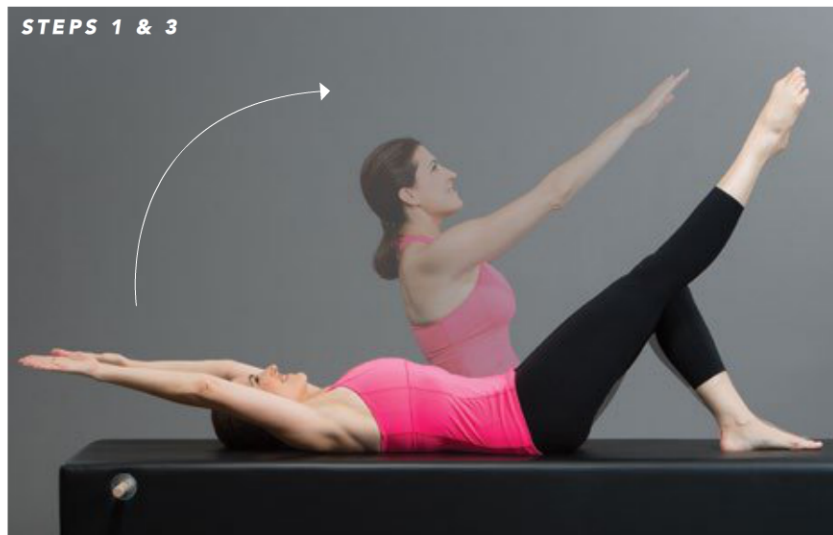
Here’s to climbing that mountain and to triumphantly tackling the Teaser by “floating up to the top!” **PS**



ON THE MAT

Single Bent-Leg Teaser

This lays the foundation for the rest of the “Teaser family” by introducing the principle of opposition in all of its glory—learning to reach the limbs away from one another to create total-body, tensile strength that helps you to float off the floor, rather than overwork to achieve the movement. It also teaches the concept of “effortless effort.”



PURPOSE: strengthens the back, quads, hamstrings, calves and feet; tones the arms

SETUP: Lie on your back with your legs bent, feet flat on the floor and your knees squeezing together.

Extend your arms long overhead, 6 inches off the floor. Make sure that your arms are at a height where you can draw your ribs together and keep your spine anchored to the floor.

1. Keeping your left knee bent, extend your right leg out in external rotation to match the height of your left bent knee. Inhale as you extend long through your fingers behind you and squeeze your inner thighs together.

2. Exhale and lift your fingertips toward the ceiling and then toward your knees, allowing the movement of your arms to naturally initiate the movement of your head curling up off the floor.

3. Peel your body off the floor as high as you can without moving your extended or supporting legs, ultimately reaching your fingertips all the way toward the toes of your extended leg.

4. Inhale at the height of the movement, then exhale as you roll back down

sequentially through your spine, returning to the starting position.

5. Do 3 reps, then repeat with your other leg extended. On the final repetition, for a greater challenge, lift your arms to your ears and roll back down 1 vertebra at a time.

TIPS: Reaching in opposition energetically through your arms and fingertips, as you anchor your supporting foot to the floor, is integral to your success. Lengthen your arms as far away from your torso as possible as you prepare for the movement and again as you curl up off the floor and as you roll back down. Deepen your navel-to-spine connection as much as you can away from the fingertips that are reaching, once again in opposition.

MODIFICATION: If you are experiencing difficulty in curling up all the way off the floor, you can use your arms as an assist. Once you get your body up to your highest point and feel stuck, place your hands behind your knees and use the strength of your arms and upper body in cooperation with your abdominals to lift your torso up the rest of the way. Engage your lats and draw your shoulders away from your ears so that you strengthen your back body, too.

Classic Teaser

The Classic Teaser creates unmatched abdominal strength, just as all of the Teaser variations do. Most importantly, it reinforces will and determination and teaches patience.

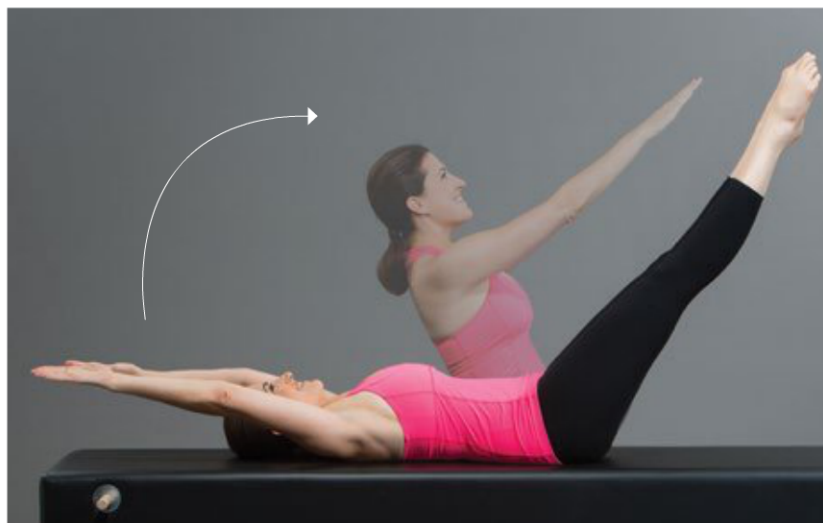


PURPOSE: strengthens the legs and back; tones the arms and shoulders; improves coordination and balance

SETUP: Lying on your back, hug your knees into your chest and lengthen your spine against the floor, connecting to your breath. Extend your legs long toward the ceiling with your heels together and toes apart. Squeeze your inner thighs together and find opposition in your legs and feet by literally trying to touch the ceiling with your toes, as your back deepens into the floor away from the reach in your legs and feet.

1. Extend your arms overhead about 3–6 inches off the floor behind you, finding the perfect angle for your arms that allows you to draw your ribs together and find your spine connecting fully with the floor.

2. Lower and lengthen your legs to your “point of control,” where your back remains anchored fully and your abdominals are engaged, drawing your navel as deeply as you can toward your spine.



3. Inhale to prepare, and reach your arms strongly overhead and your feet as far away from your body as possible.

4. Exhale as you reach your fingertips toward your toes, peeling your upper body off of the mat, maintaining a strong, energetic reach through your legs while keeping them in place.

5. With great control, continue to curl your body up, reaching through your fingertips toward your toes, coming up as high as possible while doing your best not to lower your legs.

6. Inhale at the height of the movement, then exhale as you roll

back down to the mat sequentially through your spine, maintaining the height and position of your legs as well as the oppositional energy in your arms and fingertips.

7. As soon as you return to your starting position, fire up your arms and legs, strongly deepen your abdominals and gear up to go again! Do 2 sets of 3 reps.

TIP: Reach your fingertips and toes longer and stronger away from each other than you ever have.

MODIFICATION: Same as for Single Bent-Leg Teaser.

Teaser Arms-to-Ears Variation

Like the Classic Teaser, the Arms-to-Ears Variation creates unmatched abdominal strength, but kicks it up a notch. In the second part of the exercise, the rolling back down to the mat, because the weight of the arms moves back with the upper body as it rolls down, it forces more of the upper rectus abdominus to engage, creating a greater strength and balance challenge for the abdominals and the body overall.



PURPOSE: strengthens the leg and back; tones the arms and shoulders; improves total-body coordination and control

SETUP: Same as above.

1. Repeat steps 1–6 of Classic Teaser.

2. Inhale at the height of the movement and lift your arms up to the ceiling and back so that they are exactly in line with your ears.

3. As you exhale, keeping your arms where they are, roll back down to the mat sequentially through your spine, maintaining the height of your outstretched legs as well as the oppositional energy in your arms and fingertips.

4. As soon as you return to your starting position, fire up your abdominals and strongly deepen them. Do 2 sets of 3 reps.

TIPS: It is vital to apply the principle of opposition even more here because you have the added weight of your arms to contend with as you roll back down to your starting position. Make your breath work for you as you reach longer through your fingertips and toes as you curl off the mat and then roll back down from the apex of the movement to manifest the greatest control.

MODIFICATION: If you are having trouble keeping your arms in line with your ears as you roll back, try holding them in position as long as you can, and then return to the “arms-front” position from the Classic Teaser; work up to holding the true “arms-to-ears” position.

Fold-Up

Above and beyond anything else, this exercise is empowering! It challenges your fear and makes you go beyond what you thought you were capable of as it strengthens and lengthens your entire body.



PURPOSE: enhances coordination and balance; promotes proportionate musculature and optimal posture
SETUP: Same as in Classic Teaser.

1. Repeat step 1 of Classic Teaser.
2. Draw your navel to your spine as deeply as you can as you continue to squeeze your heels together.
3. Inhale, and as you exhale, using opposition with your arms reaching strongly overhead and your feet reaching as far away from your body as possible, peel off and lift your body up in one fell swoop into a high Classic Teaser V position, with your arms reaching forward and in line with your legs at a 65 degree angle.
4. Inhale at the top of the movement, as you reach your fingertips toward your toes, and maintaining a strong energetic reach through your legs and keeping them exactly where they are, lift your arms up and back to your ears.
5. With great control, keeping your arms in place, roll back down to the mat sequentially through your spine

as you extend and lower your legs down to the mat, maintaining the powerful oppositional energy in your arms and fingertips.

6. As you roll down with your spine, deepening your abdominals all the while, your head, legs and feet should touch down to the mat at the same time in one smooth movement, as your arms simultaneously find their starting position. As soon as you return to your

starting position, fire up your arms and legs and strongly deepen your abdominals. Do 1–2 sets of 3 reps.

TIPS: Even though this exercise tends to “wow” others, it’s actually easier to perform than the Classic Teaser. The trick here, again, is opposition! In order to lift your body up in one piece, you still have to articulate through your spine with control and use your breath as fuel to help you lift up. Then, once you’re up, you have to lift your upper back even higher to counterpoise the added weight of your arms-to-ears position as you roll down to the mat and then reach like never before through your fingers and toes to ensure a soft, smooth, beautiful landing!



LEARN MORE!

Jennifer launches her “Teaching to Inspire” Mentorship Program this fall in San Diego, CA. For more information, email Kim@JenniferKries.com.



ON THE REFORMER

Classic Teaser on Long Box

This is meant to serve as a complementary exercise to the Classic Teaser on the mat. Each makes the execution of the exercise more precise and powerful in both locations. Here, on the Long Box, balance is key, and many people start to feel more courageous and empowered once they develop a comfort level with being perched high atop the machine.



SPRING SETTING: 1 spring

PROP: Long Box

PURPOSE: helps cultivate strength, balance and control

SETUP: Before you mount the Long Box, measure a hand's width away (with your hand parallel to the front) from the front edge. Then, standing alongside the Reformer with your hands in the straps, separate them behind you so that your path to mount is clear, and using your powerhouse, lift yourself smoothly up into a sitting position at the front of your Box. With the same grace and control, roll down 1 vertebra at a time into a supine position, with your legs outstretched in front of you over the footbar (which is in the down position), heels together, toes apart. Your arms are extended out to the sides of your body slightly lower than shoulder level, with slight tension on the straps. Your head is lengthening back, relaxed and dropping into a backbend stretch; it's the continuation of your upper back, which is also slightly backbending over the back of the Box.

1. Inhale to begin. Exhale, reaching energetically through your fingertips and toes, pulling on the straps, and engage your deepest abdominals and start to roll your torso up toward your legs, which are lifting effortlessly into a Teaser position.

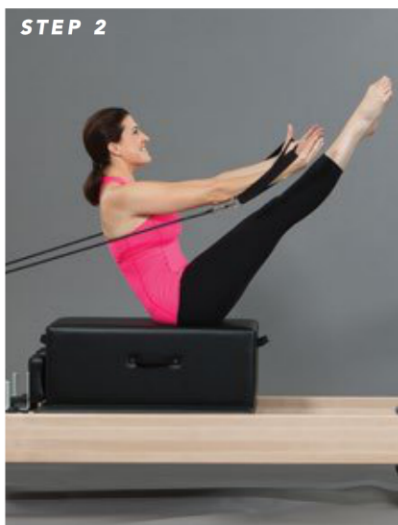
2. As you lift your upper body to meet your legs, try to time the movement so that your upper body arrives at the same time, so that you are in a beautiful balance with your arms outstretched in line with your legs, reaching up toward your toes, as you scoop your navel to your spine in opposition.

3. With great control, inhale, drawing your arms down and back,

SETUP



STEP 2



maintaining tension on the straps, and bring your hands in line with your hips while keeping your legs in place.

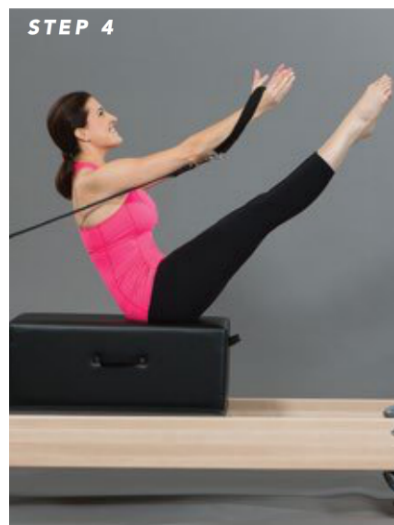
4. Exhale as you lift your arms back up, reaching powerfully through your fingertips, trying to come as high as you can, while reaching strongly through your legs and keeping your inner thighs fully engaged and your toes long and energized.

5. Repeat the lower/lift of your arms 3 times, keeping your arms softly curved and your legs steady.

6. Pause at the height of the third lift of your arms and inhale. Exhale, rolling back down, bone by bone onto your back, deepening your abs into the Box as you simultaneously lengthen your legs down to the starting position, with your arms opening to your sides like the wings of a bird. Do 2–3 sets of 3 reps.

TIPS: Once again turn to the principle of opposition. It is in this way that you

STEP 4



will find you have the strength to make the movement more effortless than you ever thought possible. Also, tell yourself that you are going to “float” up into the position, and it will keep you from overworking to get there!

MODIFICATION: If you have trouble coming up all the way with straight legs, a wonderful alternative that proves to make you work just as hard but in a different way is the “bent-knee” variation, which ironically, can be much more challenging for some bodies, as the legs no longer serve as a leveraging tool.

Start with your knees bent into your chest and rise up the same way as you would with straight legs, but keep your legs bent even once you arrive at the top of the movement. Then, lift and lower your arms 3 times, keeping your knees tucked into your chest, but with your lower legs parallel to the ground in more of a tabletop position, and then with control, roll down 1 bone at a time, drawing your knees back into the chest with control.

Teaser with Circles on Long Box

As with the other Teaser variations, this exercise makes you feel like you can take on even greater challenges.



SPRING SETTING: 1 spring

PROP: Long Box

PURPOSE: promotes balance and core stability; strengthens the powerhouse, both the abdominals and the back; strengthens the arms and shoulders

SETUP: Same as in Classic Teaser on Long Box, but skip the mounting portion.

1. Repeat steps 1–2 of Classic Teaser on Long Box.
2. With great control, inhale and lift your arms slightly higher. Exhale, keeping your back lifted, as you circle your arms around and down and then right up to the lifted position for 3 reps, maintaining tension on the straps and the height of your legs.
3. On the final circle, inhale as you lift your arms up, reaching through your fingertips, trying to come as high as you can while reaching strongly through your legs and keeping your inner thighs engaged and your toes long and energized.
4. Exhale and roll back down, bone by bone onto your back, deepening your abs into the Box as you simultaneously lengthen your legs down to the starting position, arms opening to your sides like the wings of a bird.
5. Rise up and repeat the circles in an outward pattern, and/or reverse the circles. Do 2–3 sets of 3 circles.

TIPS: Because of the added challenge with your arms, it is crucial to reach up through the crown of your head and even more strongly through your toes as your arms move around and down; a natural “recalibration” needs to take place each time your arms move so that you maintain the controlled placement of your body in space. Emphasize your breath as it will facilitate the movement and your control. Tell yourself it’s easy—it definitely won’t be easy, but perhaps easier than you think!

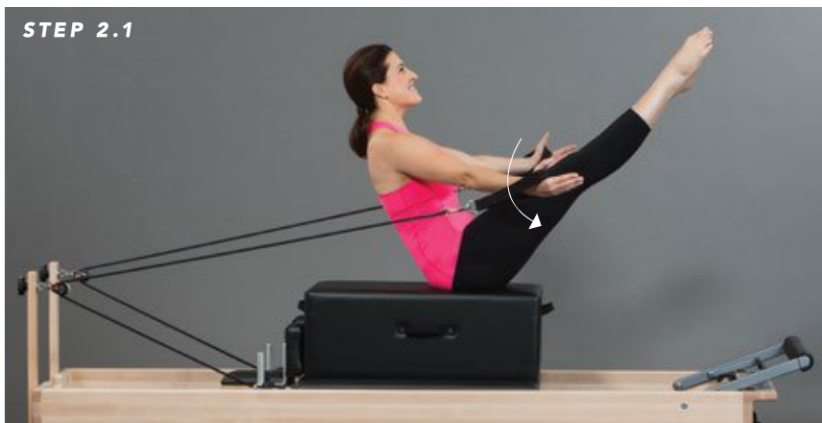
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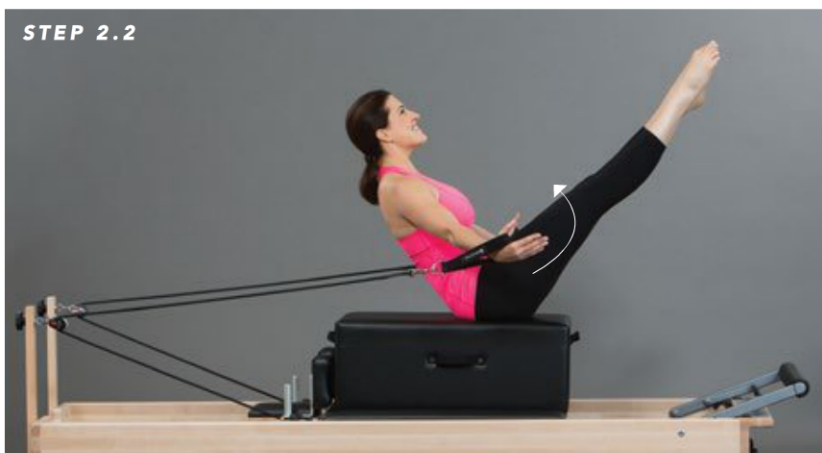
STEP 1



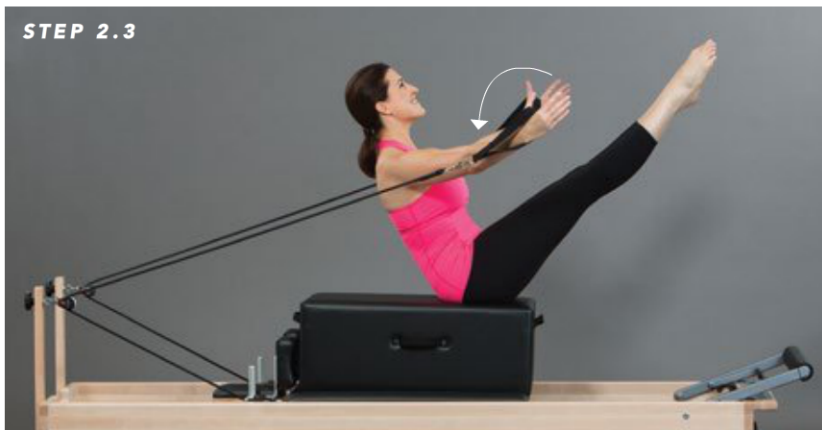
STEP 2.1



STEP 2.2



STEP 2.3



MODIFICATION: Make the circles smaller.

ADVANCED: Increase the range of motion in your arms, making the circles larger/wider while still keeping your back and your legs in the uplifted V position.

Shaving Teaser on Long Box

This exercise is by far one of the most challenging Teaser variations on the Reformer. It's meant to push your limits and test your inner Pilates warrior!



SPRING SETTING: 1 spring

PROP: Long Box

PURPOSE: improves spatial balance; increases core strength and stability; strengthens the upper body; challenges the powerhouse

SETUP: Same as in Teaser with Circles on Long Box.

1. Repeat steps 1–2 of Classic Teaser on Long Box.
2. With great control, inhale as you bend your elbows and bring your hands to form a diamond shape at your sternum.
3. While keeping your back uplifted, exhale and straighten your arms in front of you, and then bend them again for a total of 3 times, maintaining tension on the straps and the height of your legs.
4. On the final extension of your arms, inhale as you turn your palms to face the ceiling, reaching powerfully through your fingertips.
5. Open your arms out to the sides of the body while reaching strongly through your legs to roll all the way down onto your back to the starting position. Do 2–3 sets of 3 “shaves” (bending and straightening of your arms).

TIPS: As with the Circles variation, it is especially important here to reach up through the crown of your head and even more strongly through your toes as your arms bend and straighten—the same “recalibration” needs to take place each time your arms move so you maintain the controlled placement of your body in space. Rely on your breath when the going gets tough.

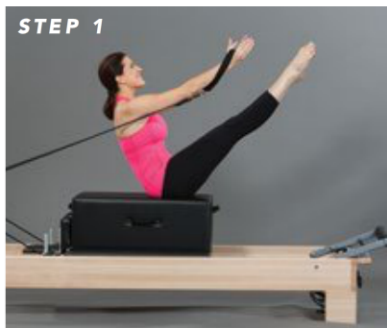
MODIFICATION: Make the shaving action shorter, rather than fully extending through your arms each time.

ADVANCED: Instead of keeping your hands in front of your body, you can “shave the back of your head” by bringing your hands behind your head, with your elbows extended to the sides of your head. Bend and straighten your arms from this position.

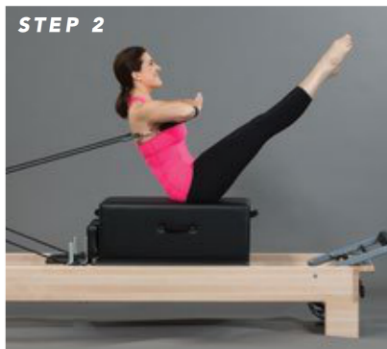
SETUP



STEP 1



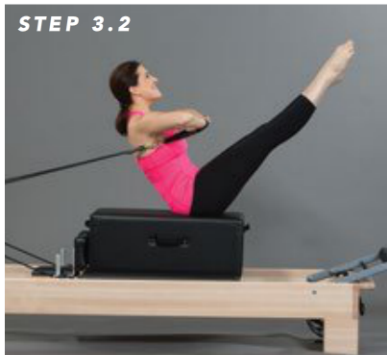
STEP 2



STEP 3.1



STEP 3.2



ON THE CHAIR

Reverse Swan

One of the most challenging exercises on the Chair, the Reverse Swan, or Reverse Teaser, asks you to confront and vanquish your own fear of heights and ability to balance while executing daring movement. Once you triumph, many other previously “daunting” exercises become accessible because most of your fear, as you will discover, is in your mind, not your body.



SPRING SETTING:

1 middle spring

PURPOSE: takes your powerhouse strength to another level entirely; tones the entire body; presents a serious balance challenge

SETUP: Sit on the top of the Chair toward the back end of the pedal side, with your hands pressing down on the pedal, fingertips pointing in toward the well of the Chair. Your legs are extended long, with your heels together and toes apart in line with your seat.

1. Inhale and lift your body slightly, curling your upper body to engage your abdominals. Exhale and lengthen back down to the starting position, for a great shoulder stretch as you press the pedal down to the floor. Do 3 reps.
2. With great focus and concentration, fire up your abdominals, lengthen through your legs and feet, and lift the pedal all the way up so it no longer has any tension, and simultaneously lift your legs all the way up to a full, Classic Teaser position, moving your arms smoothly from the pedal to an outstretched position over your legs. You've already won!

3. From the height of your Teaser, balancing on the top of the Chair, with the utmost control, draw your arms down and into a softly curved shape at the sides of your waist while continuing to reach powerfully through your legs and feet, squeezing your inner thighs together and lengthening in opposition from your powerhouse.

4. Find the pedal behind you and place your hands back in their original position, with your fingertips facing into the well of the Chair, keeping your legs from moving even an inch.

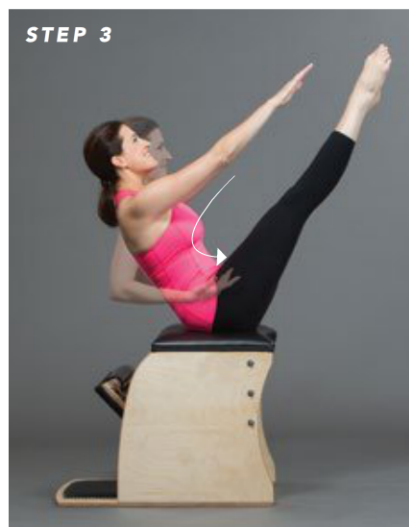
5. Press the pedal down toward the floor and with control, back up slightly again, and repeat this up-and-down action 3 times, curling your upper back up to deeply engage your navel to your spine, while keeping your legs aloft in the full Teaser position (only your upper body moves).

6. Try to go lower with your upper body each time, and on the last press down, use your abs to rise and, with tremendous focus and control, lift your upper body back up to meet your legs into a full Teaser.

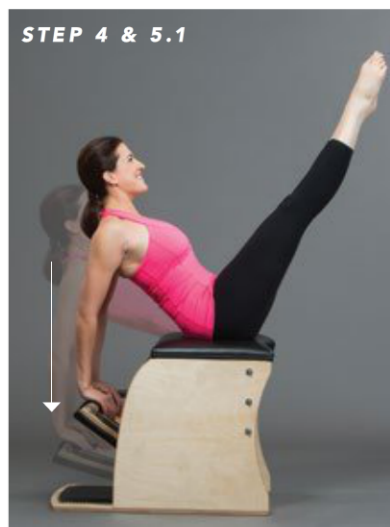
7. Repeat drawing your arms back into a soft curve at the sides of your waist, finding the pedal with your hands and simultaneously lowering and lengthening your legs as if you were doing the Teaser on the Long Box. Return to the starting position—triumphant! Do 2 reps of the entire series.



STEP 1



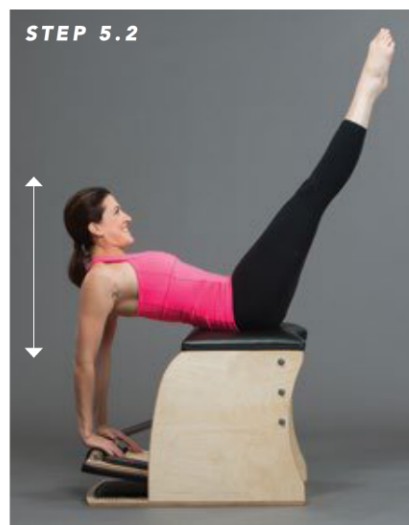
STEP 3



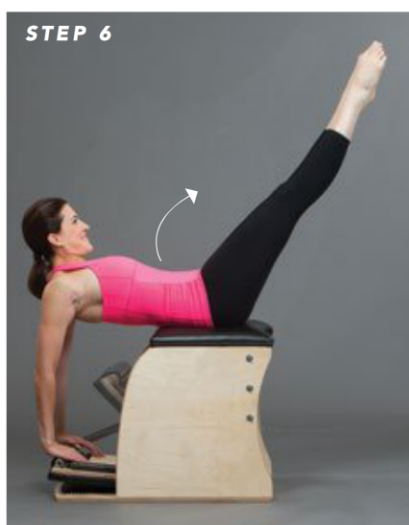
STEP 4 & 5.1

GEAR GUIDE

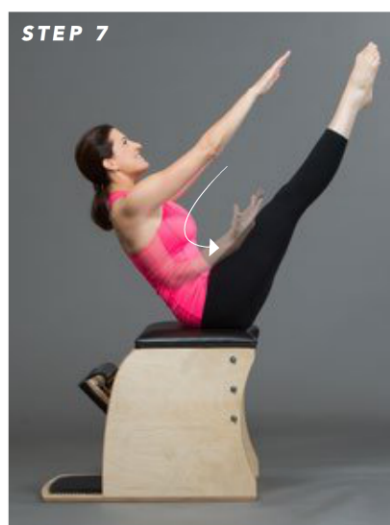
Pilates Designs By Basil
Low Chair (\$1,275;
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STEP 5.2



STEP 6



STEP 7



Integrated fitness and wellness expert, yoga devotee, author and Pilates master teacher, Jennifer Kries, is an internationally renowned mind-body-spirit innovator. The first to bring Pilates and The Method, the groundbreaking synthesis of Pilates, yoga and dance to a mass audience, her award-winning videos, The Method Series and Jennifer Kries DVDs, have sold more than 15 million units worldwide. Along with her featured appearances on Fit TV's The Method Show, her work has revolutionized the fitness community, starting the explosive wave of enthusiasm for Pilates and mind-body exercise.

Jennifer is the creator and producer of several original DVD series, including Hot Body Cool Mind: Life Force Power Workout, Waking Energy, New Body! Pilates and The Pilates Method Master Trainer Series, the definitive resource for Pilates professionals, teachers in training and Pilates devotees. She has inspired countless readers, practitioners, graduates of her programs and viewers alike to embrace her all-encompassing philosophy of movement, art, health, life and energy. Her attention to detail, superb teaching style, artistry and knowledge of Eastern healing techniques, makes her one of the most highly sought-after mind/body teachers in the world today. Her "Teaching to Inspire" Pilates Mentorship Program launches this fall. For more information, visit www.jenniferkries.com.