

Beginning a PILATES CLASS

How To Choose The Right One

By Amy Cady

You've heard of Pilates but where do you begin to look to join a studio or class? All it takes is knowing what your goals are and asking the right questions. Here are some questions and information you can use to help find properly trained and qualified Pilates studios, instructors and classes.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PILATES STUDIO

Pilates studios can vary greatly not only in price but also in size, amenities and classes offered. Also check hours,



convenience and most importantly, a pleasing environment.

What is the studio's philosophy?

Most studios adapt the philosophy that Pilates is treated not as an exercise only but as a way of life and they incorporate a variety of exercises and apparatuses that work best for the client. Make sure the studio takes care to ensure you are working appropriately, correctly and comfortably.

Does the studio have all Pilates equipment?

Depending on what the studio specializes in, most full service studios should have a variety of Pilates equipment. Make sure all the machines are of the highest quality, maintained, and cleaned on a regular basis. Look for Balanced Body, Stott Pilates, Peak Pilates, and Gratz systems. These are the equipment standards in the industry.

Does the studio offer classes for special needs, injuries and rehabilitation?

Some studios offer physical therapy along with Pilates sessions and pre-and-post natal classes. If you require these special needs, make sure the Pilates studio is trained in your area and can help you recover and maintain your health.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PILATES EXERCISE CLASSES

All successful studios offer a variety of classes, including mat classes, reformer private, semi-private and group. Some studios even offer Gyrotonic and Yoga classes. Some even go further to offer classes specialized in a certain area such as pre-and post-natal classes, Pilates for golfers or swimmers. This helps you find the classes that meet your fitness goals.

MAT CLASS VS. REFORMER CLASSES

If you are on a limited budget, it is a good idea to join a



mat class. Mat class is a great, economical place for beginners. Using the weight of the body as resistance, the instructor guides students through the various stretches and movements. Extra apparatuses can be used during class in the form of circles, therabands, foam rollers, and balls to aid in more resistance.

A Reformer class can either be a private, semi-private or group session and can include anywhere from one-to-ten clients. The reformer is a piece of equipment on which the client exercises using springs as resistance. There are other types of equipment that can be used in addition to a reformer session such as a Wunda Chair or Cadillac Table. A reformer class tends to be more expensive but the price per class is often

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lower if purchased in a series or package. Look for studios that offer discounted or free first-time sessions. That way you will be able to try a class to see if it suits your needs.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PILATES INSTRUCTOR

Are the instructors trained through a comprehensive training program?

Ask where your instructor was trained. Most studios hire instructor who have completed formal training. An instructor should have gone through a comprehensive training program that requires written and practical testing, lecture, observation, practice and apprentice hours.

Do the instructors continue with their Pilates education?

Good studios will pay their instructors to take continuing education classes and to attend workshops. This helps to keep you in the best mental and physical shape and the studio on the cutting edge of new Pilates exercises. It also keeps the exercises interesting for the clients and keeps them from an exercise plateau.

How long have the instructors been teaching Pilates?

An instructor should have a least one-year of teaching experience in mat and equipment classes. Reputable studios require their instructors to have solid knowledge on Pilates equipment, anatomy and injury prevention. This ensures your safety and enjoyment during your sessions.

Now that you know what to look for you have to try Pilates! What do you have to lose from trying a free class? You will gain a stronger, leaner, healthier you and a more confident and positive outlook on life.

Amy Cady is certified in Pilates from Studio du Corps under the direction of Diane Diefenderfer and pre/post natal Pilates under the direction of Carolyn Anthony of The Center of Women's Fitness. She brings to her teaching a unique background in mind-body fitness and dance, drawing upon much of her own personal experiences as a mother of two. In addition, she has developed the Pilates programs at Irvine Valley College, Saddleback College and the Ladera Ranch Community "LARCS". She has been practicing Pilates for over 9 years and is an active member of The Pilates Method Alliance® (PMA™). She currently owns and operates ABC Pilates in Laguna Niguel, CA.

