



## Jump into the Holiday Season with Pilates Jumpboard!!

*By Andrew Nicholls, Polestar Pilates Educator*

Now that Pilates is more mainstream as a reputable fitness exercise method, we are seeing more athletic clients enter classes and sessions. One of the main criticisms of Pilates is that it doesn't 'burn calories' and 'give cardio'. To some extent this is true, but that doesn't negate its value as an integral part of a complete fitness routine. After hearing this one too many times however, we put the reformer to the test and came up with a Cardio Reformer class.

First a little science: to elevate heart rate to 'cardio' zone, the simplest way is to take  $220 - \text{age} \times 0.75$ . (40 year old = 135 beats per minute) and maintain this, technically, for a minimum of 13 minutes for positive effect. This is a mid point heart rate and minimum time, so a range of 125-145bpm for 25-40 minutes, will give significant cardiovascular and fat burning exercise (a 30 year old would be +10bpm to this range, and a 50 year old -10bpm). We also know that exercises that improve muscle 'density' or 'size' will increase the "engine" size of the body to burn fat, even when not exercising. We already know that Pilates works very well on muscle density changes ("long, lean muscles").

There are a number of strategies on the reformer:

1. Involve large muscle groups simultaneously, combining holds (normally through the core) with challenging spring loadings on the limbs.
2. Change body positions regularly, from laying, to standing to kneeling and back again, spending only 2-3 minutes in each plane. Add challenging coordination movements into the exercises (claps, arm movements like punching or swinging, singing/yelling/laughing, head rotation etc).
3. Change springs and exercises QUICKLY
4. Alternate phases of fast intense work (like "supine jumping", "lateral skating", "running man lunges"), with slow or sustained hold (isometric) contractions like "light kneeling plank slides" (downstretch on a yellow spring), "Prone extension on box" - sans springs x 8 seconds up, 8 seconds down, and "rolldown and arm work" - heavy springs and fast high reps on arms while keeping a sustained body hold.

The result? One of our teachers, in his 50's, brought along his polar HR monitor and consistently reached levels of 145bpm through the 45 minutes of conditioning. Overall HR average for him was in the low 130's. Success! One of our instructors in Shanghai was a national figure-skating champion and she said she got a great cardio workout too!! After running the classes in Singapore, Shanghai and Seoul, there

hasn't been a single client who didn't feel the cardiovascular effects. Most were surprised that a Pilates class could achieve this.

Instructors wishing to challenge their clients could bring shorter 10-15 minute phases of high intensity cardio into their normal reformer or mat classes. A little creative combination of Pilates exercise, with some neat choreography will not only raise HR, but make a pleasant and energetic change to the class. Finally, correct FORM is a must. These exercise speeds and combination require a high intermediate level of conditioning for a full 1 hour class, but by all means, bring shorter 10 minute segments into the beginner and lower level classes. Work up over the months – it's a great way to keep clients motivated and focused on tangible improvements.

**On the reformer, try this short 8-10 minute routine**

1) 3 x 1 minute single leg jumping in chest lift x 1 red (30 secs ea leg. Rest head 5 seconds each minute)

1. Seated rolldowns x 1R1B. 2 slow, 6 fast, 1 sustained with bicep curls x8 and rowsx8. Sagittal, rotation each side. 1-2 sets. Sit tall and finish section with 16 arm presses (triceps).
2. Standing running man 1 red or 1red1Y – 2x slow deep lunges, 8x medium, 16 x fast. Change side, 1-2 sets. Combine large arm movements on medium and fast.

**For a 10-12 minute section on the mat, with good form and crisp speed,**

1. 100 (x 5 breaths) to criss-cross (5 ea side) to single straight leg stretch (5 ea side) back to final 100 x 5 breaths
2. Swan II for 30 seconds to Inverted V, push up (1-3 reps) x 3 sets to standing squat with jump x 15 reps, back to push up (1-3 reps) x 1-3 sets back to swan II for 30 secs. More advanced movers can do burpee and jump.
3. Side plank on elbow +leg lift x 3-5 each side to elbow plank leg pull front – first 3 reps real slow - to cat stretch from elbows to toes 3 times, then back to leg pulls from elbows 16 fast reps, back to side brace with fast leg kicks x 8 ea side. Repeat this for a second round in push-up position if wishing for more advanced.
4. Prone superman position – heel beats x 30 second, push up to twist x 2 each side, back down to swimming x 30 secs, back up to twist, turn around to teaser x 5 reps. Repeat twice for more advanced movers.

Happy cardio-ing. Your clients will thank you for it!