

# The Benefits of Pilates Equipment

Pilates equipment is a signature component of the Pilates methodology. The equipment originated from founder [Joseph Pilates](#)' rehabilitation work in internment camps during WWI. He used bedsprings to create resistance for strength training for the sick internees under his care. Joe Pilates' original equipment was the beginning evolution of all Pilates equipment and the start of using these systems to create strength, mobility and health in the body.

Each piece of the Pilates equipment has evolved into a sophisticated and fairly intricate design of ropes, pulleys, springs and/or platforms. They a diverse and challenging opportunity for the body, and for the brain and nervous system as well.

## Different types of Pilates Equipment

As mentioned above, Pilates equipment offers a variety of styles and training experiences. For the purposes of this blog I'll be covering the most recognized pieces. These include the iconic [Pilates Reformer](#), the [Cadillac or Trap Table](#) and the [Wunda](#) and [Exo](#) Chairs. I'll also outline the benefits that each offers.

## Pilates reformer



The [Pilates reformer](#) is perhaps the most popular and recognizable type of Pilates equipment. It is used for a diverse range of conditioning and training. The carriage is the mat where the client lies, kneels, sits or stands. It glides forward and back on a roller system. There are also straps for the hands and feet, a footbar, headrest and shoulder rests.

The instability of the Pilates reformer challenges our balance and awareness of where our body is in space. (Called proprioception.) Joint strength and stability is also enhanced due to the system of straps for the hands and feet.

When the arms and/or legs are working in the reformer straps, the limbs and joints are training in what's called isokinetic resistance. This is performing movements at a constant speed with varying resistance. This creates joint stability. Core strength, joint stability, balance and heightened body awareness are some of the many benefits of regular Pilates reformer training.

Some of the benefits of the Pilates reformer include resistance training in a supine position (on the back). This minimizes the impact and pressure on the joints and spine.

## Cadillac



The [Cadillac or Trap Table](#) is a large and imposing piece of equipment that consists of a mat on a raised table platform, a large rectangular frame mounted to the table and a variety of spring strengths and bars used for resistance training. It also provides many options to work in a supine position (lying on back) to reduce load and stress to the joints as needed.

In addition to strength and stability training, the Pilates Cadillac is often used for rehabilitation work because of the stability and height of the Cadillac table. Its diversity makes it a great piece of equipment for all clients, from those seeking rehabilitation to athletic training.

The versatility of this piece of equipment allows for a full body workout that takes the joints and spine through all planes of movement for complete and balanced strength. The Cadillac differs from the reformer in that it offers more stability in the platform and heavier resistance in the springs. It provides resistance and

support to the body that awakens more of the stability muscles while neutralizing dominance of many overused muscles.

## The Pilates Chair



The Pilates **Wunda** and **Exo** Chairs have evolved to offer an extremely challenging, full body workout. The Wunda chair was originally created by Joseph Pilates as a small apartment sitting chair that could be turned upside down and converted into a piece of equipment complete with a pedal and two to four springs. The Exo Chair is a more recent and compact version of the Wunda Chair often used in smaller spaces but offering most of the larger chair's benefits.

Chair exercises often require more upper body strength and place more pressure on the wrists in certain exercises. Due to this it is especially important to maintain proper shoulder, elbow and wrist alignment. Chair exercises can also add many balance challenges for both the advanced and novice student.

Both versions of the Pilates chair are a great tool for athletic training and can also be useful in rehabilitation. They also provide a good solution for clients that should not be placed in supine position (lying on back) such as pregnant women.

## Benefits of using Pilates equipment

With regular practice, Pilates equipment enhances balance and strengthens the abdominals, shoulders, glutes and hamstrings. This creates positive change in alignment and posture. And as the work progresses new muscle activation changes occur that prevent injury, reduce pain and improve quality of life.



Here are some highlights of using Pilates equipment

1. The pulley system on the reformer, the spring system for the Cadillac and the springs on the pedal for the Wunda and Exo chair provide resistance that engage and strengthen muscles through the full range of motion of a Pilates movement
2. The versatility of the Pilates equipment allows for a full body workout that takes the joints and spine through all ranges of motion for complete and balanced strength
3. New neuromuscular pathways (mapping the brain to specific areas of the body) can be created and movement patterns learned that can then be applied to Pilates mat work and/or any other modality of movement
4. The Pilates equipment strengthens stability muscles – this helps to neutralize the overdominance of many muscles that inhibit attaining exercise objectives

### **Focus is required**

Pilates equipment provides powerful tools for creating strength and resiliency in both the body and brain. However, due to its many moving parts, this equipment can be unsafe for the uneducated user. By design this equipment challenges both stability and concentration. The Pilates teacher and client must be absolutely present and focused when using any of this equipment and be mindful throughout each session of safety protocols.

## **Benefits of Pilates equipment with reducing stress in the body**

Pilates helps us [reduce our stress levels in the brain](#), and this is amplified when we use Pilates equipment. The level of concentration needed to perform these exercises well requires we clear our mind of all other distractions.

In addition to this, there is great focus on the breath while using Pilates equipment. This is one of the [8 Pilates Principles](#) and an intrinsic part of the [foundation of all Pilates work](#). Improving breath competency enhances all areas of life and must be practiced with intention. Learning to breathe well while performing complex movements supports more endorphin release and improves overall concentration and memory.

## Putting Pilates Equipment to the test



Today, both Pilates mat and Pilates equipment are vital components of the Lee Pilates Method. I guide my clients with specific training on and off the Pilates equipment. This helps each client take ownership and agency of their Pilates practice.

Combining the motivation of my high- touch training style with the effective outcomes produced by Pilates equipment is a powerful experience for all my clients. It's possible for anyone to gain many benefits from Pilates equipment, especially with the guidance of a skilled and caring teacher. Pilates is a lifelong practice.

If you're looking to incorporate Pilates equipment into your movement practice, book a private session with me at my [Austin-based studio](#). Otherwise, if you'd like to enjoy Pilates Mat from the comfort of your home, check out my online [Pilates classes here](#). Learn more [here](#) about my teaching method and philosophy.