

Caution: These notes should be used in conjunction with the recorded interview. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, APM cannot guarantee freedom from any errors. Treatment should be based on the advice given by the expert speaker during the interview. Please let us know if you find any errors in this text so that we can correct them.

The Pilates Reformer With Karen Grinter

About Karen Grinter

- Qualified both as a REPS Level 3 Advanced Instructor in Pilates and as a REPS Level 4 specialist instructor in Low Back Pain and Bone Health.
- Started teaching in Northamptonshire in 1997; set up a Pilates studio at the Country Cricket Ground at Abington Avenue, in Rushden and at the Chris Moody Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation Centre.
- Formed part of the teacher training programme for Body Control Pilates, a known training provider for Pilates teachers in the UK for 21 years and continues to develop as a teacher and practitioner of Pilates.
- Runs workshops for Health Professionals and teachers who wish to gain further knowledge in Pilates techniques. The Northants Pilates team can deal with an array of specialist problems such as ankylosing spondylitis, tennis elbow, hypermobility, shoulder problems, snapping hips, and total hips replacements.
- Clients include professional cricketers, footballers and rugby players; ballet dancers and gymnasts; people looking for alternative fitness options; referrals from GPs, Physiotherapists and Osteopaths; and several individuals spanning all age groups with different ability levels.

Pilates reformer



The Pilates Reformer, designed by Joseph Pilates, is widely used. It has a carriage with headrest and shoulder blocks that moves back and forth along tracks within a frame. Resistance can be varied using various combinations of springs. Straps connected to pulleys at the top end with handles at the other can be used to vary the nature of the exercises.

Footwork



Pilates exercise on the Reformer fundamentally begins with the footwork and legwork - helpful for those with lower limb issues. The routine is done with everything lined up i.e. neutral spine/neutral pelvis and with abs engagement. It develops good alignment and core strength.

The photos above show the different footwork/legwork exercise positions for beginners (L-R: tight legs, legs apart for targeting the glutes, and one leg raised). The Pilates instructor gives the cue when to change positions.

Starting position:

1. Lay supine on the carriage – head on the headrest. The shoulder blocks keep the user stable on the Reformer as they push/pull the carriage.
2. Both feet perched on the foot bar

Movement:

3. Push the foot bar to glide the carriage in the frame. The springs provide the resistance on the Reformer and the remaining resistance by the user's body weight.

Target areas:

1. The Femur (external rotation)
2. The glutes and medial hamstrings
3. The abductors

Note: The Pilates instructor determines whether or not to use springs during the routine or which springs to use and the extent of resistance required depending on the body condition of the user or the target areas to rehabilitate.

Shoulder work and mid-back work**Starting position:**

1. Both hands on the inside loops (wrists neutral)
2. Both legs held in the air

Movement:

3. Engage the abs as you pull your hands all the way down to the sides of your hips then bring it back up to the top.

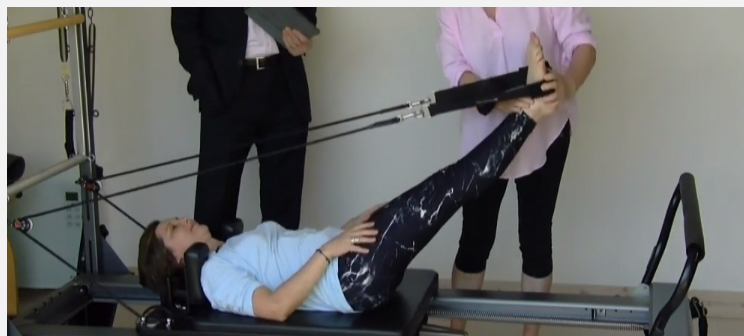


4. For a more shoulder engagement, extend the arms outwards (10 o'clock to 2 o'clock) then downwards to the sides of your hips. In terms of the range of movement, this routine is akin to lateral raises in the gym with free weights.

Layers that can be added to the routine above:

1. Add ab curls as users pull their arms down
2. Extend both legs away to straight then bring both legs back held in the air

Feet in straps



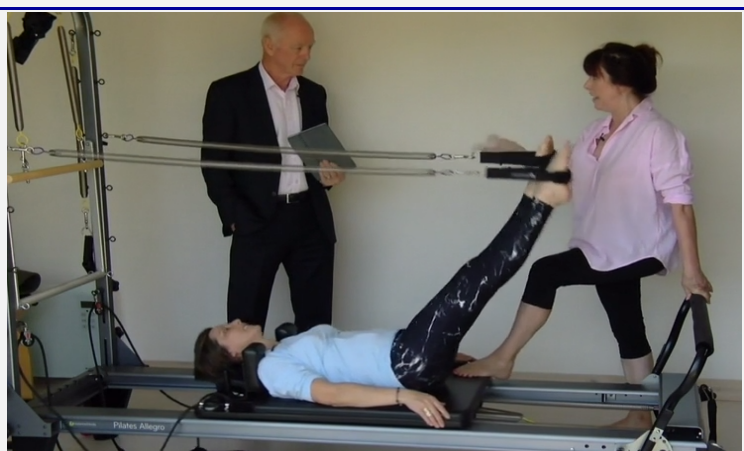
Starting position:

1. Both feet into the straps.
2. Legs glued together – Extended at 30-45 degrees angle from the carriage.

Movement:

3. Bend your knees towards you until the thigh bones are vertical then press away into 30-45 degrees (back to initial position).

Add layer: Press your coccyx into the mat (legs in neutral) then lift your legs towards you then press away.



This routine is similar to the bend-stretch routine above but the angle of the springs runs parallel to the carriage. This makes the abdominals work harder.

Note: Not for beginners.



Image/info source: www.pilatesanytime.com

The spring tension ranges from light to medium to heavy. It allows people to perform the exercise on the Reformer with control and stability.

Green: heavy
Red: Regular/Full
Blue: Light
Yellow: Very light

- **On engaging the core:** The following cues can help patients know how to engage their core: *“close your back passage; close your front passage; pull in your abdominal wall slightly; then pull the upper abdominal wall ribs in slightly.”*

Upper bodywork



Starting position

1. Kneel on all fours with both hands perched on the foot bar and both feet flush against the shoulder blocks for stability.
2. Arms straight, head lifted up, tummy pulled in, then hips forward.

Movement

3. Push away (glide the carriage backwards) avoid going into hyperextension. Go back (glide forward) to starting position. Repeat.

Rotator cuff exercise



Starting position



1. Sit on the side of the Reformer – legs hanging over the edge. Spine in the neutral position.
2. Hold onto the strap. Keep your elbow tucked in at your side at a 90-degree bend.

Movement


3. Rotate your arm out (external rotation) to the side then rotate your arms towards your body (internal rotation) without twisting your trunk. Control your movement – return to the starting position.


- **On rotator cuff exercise/"draw a sword"**: The rotator cuff exercise on the Reformer can also be done while kneeling on the Reformer (instead of sitting on a box). Starting down by your hip, draw your arm across your body and up to the ceiling akin to drawing a sword. This works the triceps as you extend your arm straight overhead.

Rollback movement


	<p>Starting position</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place the heels of your feet on the edge of the headrest, knees bent. 2. Take the trapeze bar, arms lengthened in front of your body. <p>Movement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Initiate the roll back from the tailbone and slowly roll the spine onto the mat (lying position). Roll the spine up off the mat. Keep the arms straight, spine in neutral, and shoulders relaxed.
	<p>Variation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. One hand on the trapeze bar, slowly roll the spine back onto the mat with the other arm lengthened and rotated outward, head turned to the side. 5. Swap hands and repeat to the opposite side.

Simple wrist work


	<p>Starting position</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kneel on the Reformer facing the trapeze bar. Hold onto the bar. <p>Movement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Pull the trapeze bar towards your hips – bring your elbows into the side and then press your hands
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	<p>down firmly. Go back to the starting position. Add layer by holding the trapeze bar with palms facing upwards.</p>
	<p>Variation:</p> <p>Sit on the side of the Reformer. Grab the trapeze bar downwards with one hand while the other hand is at the back of your head - do a little side bend as you breathe out.</p>

Heel raises

	<p>Starting position</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stand on the Reformer carriage. Both hands on the inside loops. <p>Movement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Raise heels off the carriage mat while pulling the loops (pull and rise). Keep the arms in twist neutral. Hold your feet for a few seconds before they return down again. 3. One hand on the loop pull it down then turn your head to face the other way - keep your hips still. Then do the other side.
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Other Variations

	<p>Starting position</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. While standing, turn your face away from the straps. Hold on to the straps. <p>Movement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Lean forward then push on the tension of the strap as you straighten your one arm out in front of your body. Do the other side.
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Starting position

1. Supine position, knees apart and bent. Both hands holding the trapeze bar.

Movement:

2. Breathe in as you lift your head – push the bar up to the ceiling. Keep your arms straight. Then roll back down onto the mat.



Variation:

While the knees are apart and bent, and the back is slightly leaning – bring the bar down behind your head and push up. Repeat.

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Starting position

1. Kneel facing the trapeze bar. Hold the bar with both hands.

Movement:

2. Roll down forward (like a cat stretch) then push the bar forward (stack the spine, pelvis up) until the back is parallel to the carriage. Slowly return to the starting position.

Routine frequency, exercise repetitions, etc.

- Frequency of the Reformer training varies per individual's preference. Some people do it once a week others do it twice or thrice a week. It all depends on what works best for them (anything is better than nothing).
- For better results, exercises should be done more than twice a week consistently.

- The repetitions entirely depend on people's fitness status or on the rehab objective. It can be by 5s or 10s but not more than 10.
- People tend to exercise more when they see a significant body improvement.
- While there are group reformer classes, personal instruction remains the best option, especially when rehabilitating an injury.
- It is best to research the background of the Pilates instructor – find out what courses they have done and the level of their exercise qualification.