

Pilates participation has grown incredibly in the current decade with the focus on matwork classes in health clubs. Boutique-style Pilates equipment studios are also meeting the needs of regular exercisers, athletes, rehab clients and even children, with the reformer as the key piece of equipment.

The Pilates reformer revolution



Unlike many exercise methods, Pilates benefits anyone with a desire for a balanced, lean, strong body. There is added value also for those with injuries such as chronic back issues or with special exercise needs such as pre- and postnatal clients. With quality instructors, these special populations will see true benefits leading to a lifestyle choice for participation in Pilates long after the problems are solved. Fitness facility owners everywhere are recognising that attrition rates in Pilates studios are very low.

Although the majority of exercisers will have heard of Pilates, sadly their awareness of the scope of the discipline will most likely be limited. To the question: "What is Pilates", a typical answer will be: "Stretching exercises you do on a long soft mat."

Few will have any awareness that mat-based Pilates was conceived as an advanced stage in Pilates programming and that novices and remedial clients would initially develop their technique and musculature on a range of bizarrely-named, somewhat strange-looking pieces of equipment.

The core piece of Pilates equipment is the reformer. It offers total versatility to exercisers of all ages and fitness levels, seamlessly connecting mind and body as users isolate their peripheral limbs in functional exercise patterns while stabilising the core. The reformer is unlike any other piece of equipment on the gym floor – using a series of springs to connect the frame of the machine to a moving carriage supports the body in lying, sitting, kneeling or standing positions. The carriage slides quietly on bearings in linear channels as cables or foot-bars are pulled or pushed with arms or legs.

Recent articles in the UK professional fitness press (*Health Club Management*, March 2009) have suggested that non-traditional Pilates machines – such as vibration platforms, gravity machines and cable technology such as Technogym's Kinesis equipment line – can act as substitutes for Pilates reformers. The reality is that just as the Pilates method has been refined over many decades, method-specific equipment such as Pilates reformers have proven themselves to deliver the results that maintain loyal participants.

How to choose a reformer

01. Research

Just like any capital purchase, the first stage is to research the market and understand fully the choice of reformers that are available. Expect to have your decision-makers don their sports gear and take a practical "road test". Don't just think about price and aesthetics today but try to look at five-year-old equipment and see how it is standing up to use. Talk to other club owners about what they have in their facility and what their members like.

02. Installation and warranty

You wouldn't buy a treadmill or a weights machine without a clear understanding that it would be delivered, installed and then fully serviced on request (with spare parts available in the UK) and a reformer is no different.

03. Understand your needs

Reformers come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and different reformers will offer different advantages. Do you need one reformer for rehab work or a series for classes. Do they need to stack and roll away when not in use or is there sufficient room for them to stay permanently in place? Do they require the

versatility to accept an upright frame for future programming? The STOTT PILATES® Rehab Reformer™ is high off the ground and therefore accessible for older clients and sports rehab. The Professional Reformer™ is ideal for all client types and suitable for both in-club and boutique Pilates studios. Both Rehab and Professional Reformers accept upright frames or are available as the unique V2 Max Plus™ Reformer* variation. The STOTT PILATES Rack & Roll® and Group SPX™ Reformers are easily stacked and are very economical. So again, it depends on what your needs are in running your business. By offering STOTT PILATES reformer programming on premium reformers, you will be offering your members a proven, timeless and progressive activity that bonds them to your facility.

Pilates Solutions Limited is the exclusive UK distributor for STOTT PILATES equipment and has the licence to deliver the instructor education courses and workshops through its training division.

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