

Exercise Spotlight: Side Kick Series Setup

Peak Pilates® trains all of its instructors on eight exercises in the Side Kick Series. But before we teach them to our students, success starts with the setup!

The Side Kick Series is a beautiful flowing sequence of exercises that moves through a wide variety of directions, ranges of motions, and planes. The goal of this series is to challenge stability in a side lying position, develop dynamic flexibility and strength of the legs, and increase range of motion in the hip joint. The secret to performing this series successfully lies in the setup. Do it wrong, and you might be getting the same benefits as lying on couch. Do it right, however, and you are developing a strong, long Pilates body.

Let's look at the setup one step at a time. After you complete [Shoulder Bridge Prep](#), Saw, Spine Twist or Jack Knife (depending on the order), you are ready to transition into the Side Kicks. Here is the setup:

- 1. Align your spine along the back edge of your mat.** It's a handy ruler for you.
- 2. Bring your hand behind your head.** This is actually the part that is so often performed incorrectly. Place your hand with the fingers and thumbs together at the base of your skull and pull to create length. Check to make sure that your upper arm is along the edge of the mat in line with your spine and that your eyes are looking straight ahead.

3. **Place your top hand on the mat approximately 6 inches in front of the breastbone.** Your fingers and thumbs should be together and pointing toward the head end of the mat. This hand presses down lightly to help connect the ribs and scapula and provide extra help with stability. As you progress, it too will come behind the head!
4. **Carry your feet to the front corner of the mat, halfway between straight and a 45-degree angle.** Flex the bottom foot, keeping the outer edge of the foot on the mat, anchoring the entire side body down into the mat from the elbow to the foot. Turn the top leg out from the hip and encourage the foot into a Pilates Point.

Of course, these things happen with an economy of motion and happen almost simultaneously. Now you are ready for action and the fun begins!

There are many choreographic variations found for the Side Kick Series. Did you know that Joseph Pilates' book Return to Life through Contrology, there is only one exercise in the Side Kick Series? It's true, and it's the Front & Back. The following exercises are included in the Peak Pilates education:

Once you have performed these exercises with a brisk tempo and dynamic rhythm, you have indeed invigorated your body. But not to worry because you get to do a Beats on the Belly transition, then have the second side to look forward to!



This article was contributed by Zoey Trap, MS. With over 35 years of teaching experience in mind/body/spirit exercise, she leads the Peak Pilates® MI Team and is the co-author of the Peak Pilates® Instructor Education program.