

‘The Hundred’: How To Make 100 Pumps and 10 Breaths Count

The Peak Pilates® program consists of an extensive library of movements that have a multitude of physical fitness benefits. However, while the movements seem simplistic in nature, it can be easy to overlook the finer details that go into performing each of them. This month we will start by featuring The Hundred, one of the most universally practiced movements and the foundation exercise in the mat sequence.

The Hundred calls on all of our body systems to wake up and essentially acts as our warm up on the mat. Now, let’s look at how to effectively perform The Hundred through proper breathing, head placement and leg positioning.

Breathing

Work to breathe from deep in your powerhouse. In The Hundred, the breath is smooth – breathing in for five counts, and out for five counts.

Head

Holding your head and the legs up requires a strong connection to your core, commonly referred to as the powerhouse. Learn to pattern the lift of your head so that you are curled up and over with eyes toward your center all the way up to the inferior tips of your shoulder blades as your ribs glide toward your pelvis. This can be learned with the help of the fundamentals Head Nod and Neck Curl.

Legs

Don't settle for 45 degrees, learn to hold them up! It is important that you work toward the ideal of developing the strength to hold your feet at eye-level. So what's the secret? Hold your legs while strongly engaging your seat by pulling into the centerline with your sitz bones and inner thighs. Simultaneously you will deeply pull the abs in and up, thereby making a long, hollow shape, similar to a canoe. Introducing new ways to challenge your legs will help you grow stronger and more stable, thereby allowing you to continuously refine your form. Below are a few ideas you might like to consider incorporating in the Hundred.

- Bend one knee with your foot on the floor and extend one leg out at eye level. Alternate legs at the 40 pump and 80 pump marks. Hold your legs as low as you can without sacrificing your spine.
- Place your feet on a small ball, Ugi or some type of exercise step. Sit up with your legs extended out and your feet on the prop. As you inhale, pump press downward through the back of your legs engaging your heel to seat connection. As you exhale, lift both legs up while you maintain your low back on the mat. Continue through your 100 pumps using this up and down pattern.

While it seems easy enough, the reality is that very few beginners can safely and successfully achieve the ideal form, so mastering all elements of the movement allows for a safe progression.