

Cat Stretch: Rounded Back



PURPOSE: promotes a flexible, articulate and strong spine; increases flexibility of the lower back
SETUP: Get on all fours with your back flat like a tabletop, knees directly under your hips and arms under your shoulders.

1. Contract your center and round your spine toward the ceiling. Return to the starting position. Do 3–5 repetitions.

TIPS: Imagine that there is a curved line from the top of your head to your tailbone. Keep your shoulders pressed away from your ears.



Cat Stretch: Straight



PURPOSE: teaches us to change the position of the spine (from flexed to straight) with ease and grace while articulating the vertebrae
SETUP: Same as above.

1. Slowly and with control, straighten and lengthen your spine from your center until you feel a straight line from the top of your head to your tailbone. Return to the starting position. Do 3 repetitions.

TIPS: Do not allow your neck to arch above your shoulders.



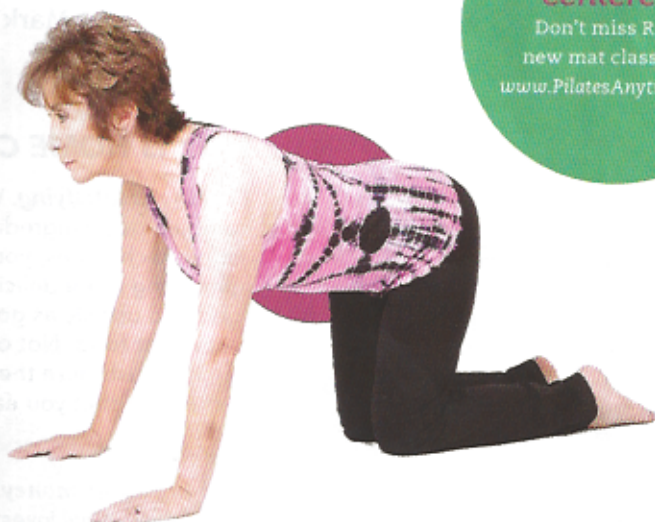
Cat Stretch: Arched



PURPOSE: teaches us to change the position of the spine from straight to flexed; increases mobility of the vertebrae; releases back tension and strain
SETUP: Same as above.

1. Arch your back by lifting your tailbone and the crown of your head toward the sky without hunching your shoulders. Make sure to keep the movement even and flowing from your center. Return to the starting position. Do 3–6 repetitions, or more if it feels good.

TIPS: Remember that you are as young as your spine is flexible! Keep your spine articulate, strong and flexible. Allow it to move in all directions and keep it flowing from your center.



Still not feeling centered?

Don't miss Risa's new mat classes on www.PilatesAnytime.com!

Los Angeles native Risa Sheppard is the creator of the Sheppard Method Pilates, a unique blending of the body, mind and spirit. One of the first to teach Pilates, she received her formal training in the early 1970s under the tutelage of legendary master instructor Ron Fletcher in Beverly Hills, where she taught for five years. Risa has appeared on numerous television shows, including Shoppers Television Network and KTLA Morning Show, and she was the co-host of The Jack LaLanne Show. Additionally, she has been profiled on Entertainment

Tonight, KABC, KCBS and KTTV News. Risa is the author of Risa Sheppard's Fitness Formula for a Firm and Flat Stomach (Multi Fit Publications, 1987) and has appeared in such magazines as Vogue, Elle and Ladies' Home Journal, to name a few. Risa is the inventor of the Wheel of Fitness, now known as the Ring Flex, which is sold nationwide via Balanced Body. For more information, or to snag a copy of her Pilates! A Gentle Formula to a Strong Body DVD (Sheppard Method, 2010), visit www.sheppardmethod.com.