

The Society for the Pilates Method: Scopes of Practice

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Introduction

The Society for the Pilates Method (SPM) has defined a number of Scopes of Practice to help ensure both the highest professional standards for Pilates teachers and greater transparency in the skills, knowledge, and qualifications that a teacher should hold.

The purpose of this overview is to ensure that teachers of the Pilates Method have a clear pathway to developing a **comprehensive understanding** of the whole system, working towards mastery of **Matwork and Comprehensive Apparatus (Reformer, Cadillac, Wunda Chair, and Ladder Barrel)**.

The SPM recognises the importance of **preserving the history and integrity of the Pilates Method**, ensuring that teachers are not simply directing movement but are also **educators, guiding their clients towards understanding of, and progression** within, the Method.

Background

All SPM Scopes of Practice are defined against the following background:

1. Pilates Method as a Complete System

Teachers recognised by the SPM must, at a minimum, be qualified in **Pilates Method Matwork** and be aware of the pathway towards competence in the **full Comprehensive Pilates system**, which includes:

- Matwork (as a prerequisite)
- Reformer
- Cadillac (Trapeze Table)
- Wunda Chair
- Ladder Barrel

Teachers may qualify in Matwork and Reformer as separate disciplines, but must understand them **as a part of the complete Pilates system**.

2. Understanding of the Pilates Method and Its History

Teachers must demonstrate knowledge of a **solid foundation in the history and evolution** of the Pilates Method, including:

- **Joseph Pilates' principles** and their applications.
- The transition of Pilates from its original method to contemporary applications, while maintaining its core integrity.
- How the **different pieces of apparatus complement and enhance Matwork**.

This historical and theoretical knowledge is critical for teachers to make informed choices in their programming and work with clients.

3. Teaching Approach: More Than Just Instruction

Teachers must possess a range of **teaching skills beyond direction**, ensuring that their sessions:

- **Inform clients** on why they are doing movements, not just how.
- Encourage **active learning**, helping clients develop body awareness and autonomy in their movement practice.
- Incorporate **progressions and regressions** based on individual needs rather than rigidly following a preset sequence.

The SPM recognises that a Pilates teacher's role extends beyond guiding exercises. It involves **mentoring clients through movement and improving their understanding of their own bodies**.

4. Professional Standards and Progression

To maintain professional recognition within SPM, teachers must:

- Hold a **minimum prerequisite of Matwork training** before progressing toward Comprehensive Apparatus training.
- Demonstrate **anatomical and biomechanical knowledge** beyond basic instruction, allowing for informed and appropriate adaptations.
- Engage in **ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**, ensuring the growth of knowledge and teaching skills.
- Have a full understanding of the mechanics of all studio apparatus and of related client safety.
- Maintain a strong **understanding of client safety**, particularly when working in a group setting, ensuring **individual needs are met while maintaining class flow**.

5. Teaching the Pilates Method in a Group Setting

When teaching the Pilates Method in a **group setting**, teachers must ensure that:

- Class sizes, whether Matwork or Reformer, allow for **individual attention and correction, and include exercises that are appropriate for the size of class and the level of participants**.
- **Hands-on adjustments** and detailed cueing are incorporated where appropriate and with client permission.
- Exercises are **progressed intelligently** based on the ability and needs of participants.
- The **Method remains central to the practice**, avoiding fitness-based adaptations that dilute its effectiveness.

6. Differentiation from Fitness-Based Pilates

The SPM approach and principles differentiate themselves from **fitness-based Pilates** by ensuring:

- A deep **commitment to the original Method**, rather than delivering modified fitness classes.
 - A focus on **teaching principles**, not just exercises.
 - Teachers are aware of, and are encouraged to **progress towards, mastery of the full system**.
 - **Class sizes** allow for **individual attention and correction** and provide a **safe and supportive environment for clients**.
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Summary

SPM Scopes of Practice are designed to ensure that teachers uphold the **highest standards of Pilates education and teaching**, preserving the Method's integrity while continuously developing their knowledge and skills. Teachers recognised by the SPM must demonstrate **a deep understanding of the full Pilates system, a commitment to educating their clients, and a strong historical and theoretical foundation**.

The SPM encourages ongoing learning, enabling Pilates teachers to progress towards **comprehensive certification**, and maintaining a high standard of practice within the profession.

SPM Scopes of Practice

The Scopes of Practice being developed by the SPM are:

Matwork

Level 3 Pilates Method Matwork

Level 4 Pilates Method Matwork

SPM Pilates Method Matwork 'Modern Apprenticeship'

Adapted Matwork Pilates Method for Special Populations/Conditions

includes Pre- & Postnatal; Bone Health/Osteoporosis; Older Adults; Low Back Pain

Adapted Pilates Method Matwork for Children & Adolescents

For teaching to 16 years or below

Teachers may only be able to use small equipment/accessories (such as band, roller, small ball, Gym Ball, Toning Circle) in classes if these have been specifically covered on a recognised course that they have undertaken.

Studio Apparatus/Studio Equipment

Pilates Method Reformer

Pilates Method Group Reformer

Adapted Pilates Method Studio Apparatus for Special Populations/Conditions

Includes Pre- & Postnatal; Bone Health/Osteoporosis; Older Adults

Comprehensive Pilates Method Studio Apparatus

SPM Comprehensive Pilates Method Studio Apparatus 'Modern Apprenticeship'.