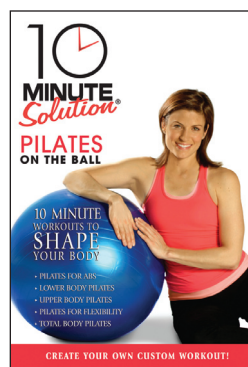
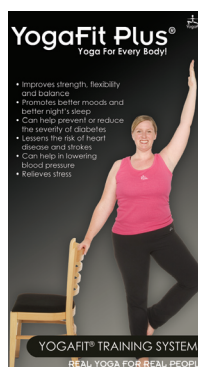
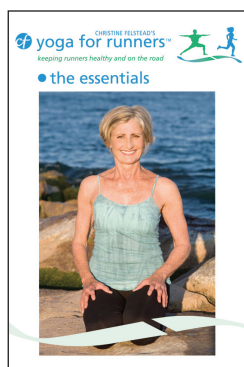
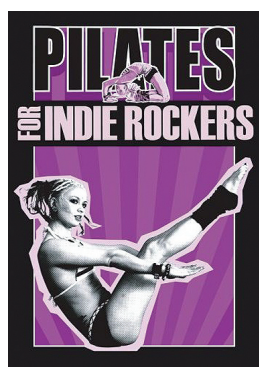


A HEALTHY BALANCE

By Manya Shorr



Yoga and Pilates are everywhere these days (see, for example, former Republican candidate for vice president Sarah Palin demonstrating the tree pose in *Runner's World* magazine), and it's no wonder. Innumerable medical studies have shown that yoga and Pilates not only help people improve their fitness levels and slim down but also help them to alleviate asthma symptoms, manage arthritis and carpal tunnel pain, decrease cardiovascular risk factors, and improve one's emotional well-being.

In a 2005 study conducted by the American Council on Exercise (bit.ly/ONZO7), researchers found that "the regular practice of Hatha yoga significantly improved the subjects' flexibility, muscular strength and endurance, and balance." And a 2008 survey conducted by Harris Interactive Service Bureau on behalf of *Yoga Journal* (bit.ly/wGK6o) shows that almost 16 million people in the United States practice yoga and more than 18 million more are interested in the practice.

But yoga and Pilates classes can be expensive, and with the recent economic downturn, fewer people are able to afford individual or even group instruction, making DVDs for home practice an especially popular option.

Pilates and yoga in a nutshell

Invented by Joseph Pilates in Germany during World War I, the discipline of Pilates (originally dubbed "Controllogy") was initially intended to help in the rehabilitation of injured sol-

diers. Pilates works on the incredibly important "powerhouse" muscles, the large group of core muscles that wraps around the abdomen, back, and hips, and it can help immensely in eradicating lower back pain, the bane of existence for so many Americans. Pilates is all about muscle control and small, concentrated movements. Originally, the practice required several large machines (e.g., the Reformer, the Cadillac) and so was limited to studio use, but much of the practice has since been augmented for home use. A far newer practice than yoga, Pilates has fewer branches and offshoots.

Yoga is a 5000-year-old tradition practiced differently in different parts of the world. In this country, the emphasis in yoga is largely on the body and the asanas, or physical postures, though the spiritual tradition might interest your patrons as well.

Hatha yoga, the most physical type of yoga practice, has various branches. There is Kundalini, which focuses on breathing and the chakras, or energy centers; the incredibly athletic and regimented practice of Ashtanga; Iyengar, which stresses exact form; Kripalu, whose focus is meditation and the interplay of mind, body, and energy; and the heart-centered practice of Anusara. There also are numerous nontraditional approaches, e.g., core yoga, power yoga, yoga dance, and partner yoga.

As our population ages, seniors are seeking out workout routines that are gentle on their joints and can help manage chronic pain. Yoga is ideal for those purposes and has also proven helpful with postsurgery rehabilitation.

Only Bikram yoga is not recommended for library collections, as it is impractical for the home practitioner to crank up the heat to 112° with 80 percent humidity.

Manya Shorr is a Reference Librarian at Omaha Public Library and a regular contributor to LJ's Video reviews. She has been practicing yoga for over five years and personally tried out more than 50 DVDs for this article



Building a core collection

There are plenty of yoga and Pilates discs available to fulfill the various needs of your patrons, especially those who are new to these traditions. Beginning and intermediate students will be the best served by your selection as advanced practitioners demand a deeper understanding of the practice, which can arguably only be achieved in a classroom setting; it is far more difficult to find a DVD that will fulfill the requirements of an advanced practitioner and yet also be appropriate for a starter collection. Therefore, a core collection should focus on the needs of the basic user.

What to look out for

When choosing DVDs, keep equipment in mind. Do discs require the purchase of an exercise ball, yoga blocks, a yoga strap? Much home equipment can be improvised—a long T-shirt can be used for a strap, for example. However, a yoga/Pilates mat will be required for every DVD and that should not make any disc prohibitive.

While practicing, users will many times be looking away from the television, so instructional voice cues are vital, especially specifics on proper form and modifications. Although yoga and Pilates seem like gentle and straightforward disciplines, their improper execution can cause injuries. Do the instructors address these issues? Are they tuned in to mistakes in form common to the average practitioner? Discs that don't address these critical considerations should not be purchased.

For the highest production values, well-established instructors—e.g., Shiva Rea, Baron Baptiste, John Friend—and dis-

tributors like Acacia, Anchor Bay, Yoga Journal, Pranamaya, and Gaiam are good places to start. Don't restrict yourself to the big names alone, however. Independent practitioners and small studios, too, have strong offerings. *Yoga Journal* (www.yogajournal.com) and *Pilates Insight* (www.pilatesinsight.com) are both good resources for DVD reviews.

Condition is the prime reason to discard any item in your collection. The routines may get enhanced and jazzed up over time, but the basics won't go out of style or affect discs' usefulness. Also, keep the running time in mind. While discs with longer sequences are solid choices, balance them with shorter, more accessible programs.

Finally, pay attention to the availability of these materials in new media. For example, TV host Daisy Fuentes recently released a Pilates program exclusively for the Nintendo Wii that allows practitioners to customize workouts and track fitness levels (for more info, visit daisyfuentespilates.com).

Using the web to your advantage

Several sites, like www.yogajournal.com, offer streaming yoga and Pilates videos for a monthly fee, though also be on the lookout for free offerings. That site, for example, which also features podcasts, celebrity playlists, and widgets, sends everyone who subscribes to its newsletter a link to a free full-length video. Free clips of yoga/Pilates DVDs as well as several web-exclusive routines can be found on sites like YouTube and www.collagevideo.com. And podcasts for smart phones or MP3 players, too, are usually free. Starred (★) titles below are essential purchases.

FOR BEGINNERS

Element™: AM & PM Yoga for Beginners.

64 min. UPC 0-13131-55609-4.

★**Element™: Pilates Weight Loss for**

Beginners. 51 min. UPC 0-13131-55619-3.

ea. vol: Anchor Bay Entertainment, www.anchorbayent.com/fitness. 2008. \$14.98.

AM & PM Yoga offers two complete practices on a single disc—one for the morning and one for the evening. Well-produced, with clear instruction from celebrity yoga instructor Elena Brower, it is perfect for those new to yoga, as each variation is a manageable 30 minutes long. *Pilates Weight Loss* instructor Brooke Siler trained under Joseph Pilates's protégée, Romana Kryzhanowska, and it shows. This 30-minute mat routine is definitely for beginners but is still challenging.

Pilates for Beginners with Kristin McGee.

60 min. 2008. UPC 0-54961-81829-7.

Yoga for Beginners with Desi Bartlett. 50

min. 2009. UPC 0-54961-81149-6.

ea. vol: Acacia, acacialifestyle.com. \$14.99.

Bartlett offers two solid, simple yoga routines: lunar (evening) and solar (morning). Each 25-minute routine is well led, with simple directions and optional Spanish and Spanglish audio tracks. Longtime yoga/Pilates instructor McGee's basic introduction to mat-work Pilates includes two ten-

minute and two 20-minute regimens that can be intermixed. Her directives are spot on for getting tight and toned.

Yoga Emergency: The 12-Minute Workout

with Kristen Eykel. 5 discs. Big K Prods., www.kristeneykel.com. 2008. ea. vol: \$9.99; set \$35.

Each disc in this five-disc series—*Arms & Shoulders* (UPC 8-27836-00812-9), *Back* (UPC 8-27836-00806-8), *Hips* (UPC 8-27836-00808-2), *Full Leg Stretch* (UPC 8-27836-00814-3), and *Pregnancy* (UPC 8-27836-00810-5)—is only 12 minutes long and easily accessible for the home practitioner. TV host and model Eykel also leads a bonus meditation section on each disc.

ALL ABILITY LEVELS

Crunch: Yoga Body Sculpt. 41 min. Anchor Bay Entertainment, anchorbayent.com/fitness. 2008. UPC 0-13131-59759-2. \$14.98.

This program is the definition of power yoga—it's a tough workout. Bethany Lyons takes participants through the basic sun salutation sequence and many other poses that are designed to shape the body, with an emphasis on abs and the derriere.

★**More Than Mat Pilates.** 3 discs. 235 min.

Sarah Picot, www.picotpilates.com. 2008. UPC 8-25462-33339-4. \$41.50.

Certified Pilates instructor Picot modifies exercises designed for Pilates studio machines in this innovative three-disc series so that home practitioners can experience an authentic studio workout without all the equipment. Divided into beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, the discs each contain a complete practice.

Pilates for Indie Rockers.

Yoga for Indie Rockers.

ea. vol: 45 min. Halo 8 Studio, www.amazon.com. 2007. \$19.95.

The "For Indie Rockers" series, led by certified yoga/Pilates instructor Chaos, lets the users choose from a variety of indie rock soundtracks and follow along with a class of pierced and tattooed practitioners. Way cool.

PilatesFit. 75 min. YogaFit, dist. by Victory

Multimedia, sales@victorymultimedia.com. UPC 8-26027-33215-9. \$19.95.

Part of the YogaFit® Training Systems, this program offers an hour-long Pilates mat practice with certified personal trainer Rose Zahn. Excellent explanation of poses bookended with a warm-up and cool-down.

★**Power Yoga for Happiness.** 2 discs. 253+

min. Eoin Finn Yoga, www.eoinfinnyoga.com. 2008. UPC 7-74247-91235-7. \$24.99.

Collection Development | Yoga/Pilates DVDs

Vancouver, BC-based instructor Finn (a self-proclaimed yogi, surfer, and “Blissologist”) brings his unique vinyasa (power) yoga to this very long two-disc set, subdivided into five sections ranging from “Full Happiness” (80 min.) to “Quickie” (32 min.). Clearly, Finn is intensely committed to yoga, and here he caters to a variety of skill levels. You can’t go wrong with this or any other of his DVDs.

★**10 Minute Solution: Pilates on the Ball.** 55 min. Anchor Bay Entertainment, www.anchorbayent.com/fitness. 2008. UPC 0-13131-53409-2. \$14.98.

This series—which also includes *Pilates Perfect Body*, *Slim & Sculpt Pilates*, and *Prenatal Pilates*—is perfect for those pressed for time. Gold-certified Pilates instructor Lara Hudson leads numerous ten-minute segments; each disc includes multiple workouts that can be programmed to play consecutively for a longer practice. Exercise ball required.

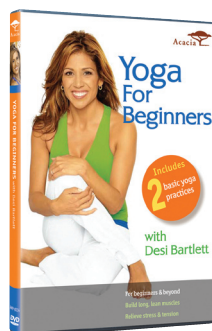
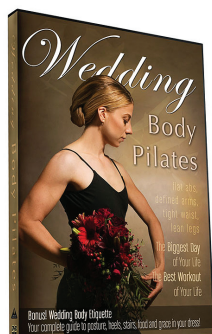
★**Yin Yoga: The Foundations of a Quiet Practice.** 2 discs. 338 min. Pranamaya.com, www.pranamaya.com. 2005. ISBN 978-0-9763836-4-2. \$26.95.

This two-disc set from Paul Grilley is quite a powerhouse. The antithesis of high-energy yoga, yin yoga requires holding a pose for five minutes or longer, with muscles relaxed at all times. It challenges the practitioner to calm the mind and slowly stretch the body. Disc one is all lecture and theory; disc two offers many hours of yin practice.

Yoga Dose. 130 min. Yoga Dose, dist. by Victory Multimedia, sales@victorymultimedia.com. 2009. UPC 8-37654-07827-3. \$29.95. While many yoga DVDs can feel over-stylized, *Yoga Dose* is shot with a single camera in a stripped-down space, offering an authentic studio experience. It has two complete classes—one taught by Lara Falberg, the other by fellow yoga instructor Nicole Jurovics. Beginners and veterans alike will enjoy this prescription.

★**Yoga Journal's Great Instructors.** 3 discs. 4½ hrs. Yoga Journal, www.yogajournal.com/yogadvds. 2009. ISBN 978-0-09-926690-7. \$49.99.

Yoga Journal's annual San Francisco conference attracts the best of the best instructors, and this series lets practitioners experience a



live conference/class in their own home. On individual 90-minute discs, Baron Baptiste (*Foundations of Power Vinyasa Yoga*), Seane Corn (*Yoga from the Heart*), and Shiva Rea (*Free Flow Vinyasa*) instruct users in the athletic practice of core/power yoga. The best of modern American yoga; highly accessible. Discs sold separately for \$16.99.

FOR SPECIAL AUDIENCES

★**Carol Dickman's Bed Top Yoga: Simple Stretches & Yoga Techniques You Can Do in Bed.** 33 min. ISBN 978-0-9645683-5-8.

★**Carol Dickman's Seated Yoga: Simple Stretches & Yoga Techniques You Can Do in a Chair.** 43 min. ISBN 978-0-9645683-6-5.

ea. vol: Yoga Enterprises,

dist. by Victory Multimedia, sales@victorymultimedia.com. 2007. \$19.95.

Stretch/yoga instructor Dickman has a very calming manner as she demonstrates exercises appropriate for all practice levels, including advanced practitioners looking for a relaxing session. Requires only a bed or a chair; just the thing for people with limited mobility. (LJ 2/15/08)

Christine Felstead's Yoga for Runners™: The Essentials. 55 min. Yoga for Runners, www.yogaforrunners.ca. 2008. UPC 0-88907-20277-2. \$21.95.

There are lots of specialized, exercise-specific yoga videos out there, but this one, designed for athletes who want to enhance their running, has mass appeal. Fitness expert Christine Felstead uses solid alignment cues and modifications for beginners.

Mamacise™: Yoga for Moms with Helen Garabedian. 42 min. UPC 8-96560-00102-7. \$12.99.

Play n' Flourish: Yoga for Your Baby from Birth to 10 Months. 70 min. UPC 8-96560-00100-3. \$19.99.

Sleep n' Grow: Yoga for Your Baby from Birth to 10 Months. 55 min. UPC 8-96560-00101-0. \$19.99.

ea. vol: Itsy Bitsy Yoga®, dist. by AV Café, www.theavcafe.com. 2008.

Helen Garabedian, a certified yoga, infant massage, and infant developmental movement instructor, knows what she's talking about when it comes to infant yoga. *Sleep n' Grow* and *Play n' Flourish* each offer three separate routines in three categories: “One-on-One with Helen,” “Mini Class,” and

“Especially for Newborns.” *Mamacise* (LJ 3/1/09), for new mothers, includes short routines from *Sleep n' Grow* and *Play n' Flourish*, making it a smart choice for libraries that can only afford one disc in the series.

★**Wedding Body Pilates.** 90 min. Courage Zone, Inc., dist. by AV Café, www.theavcafe.com. 2009. \$19.99.

Instructor Dawn Wessman leads a nearly hour-long Pilates session that will be challenging and enjoyable to all users, not just brides-to-be. There are wedding body etiquette tips as a bonus.

★**Yoga for Families.** 31 min. Yoga To Have Fun, LLC, www.yogatohavefun.com. 2008. UPC 8-98681-00125-2. \$19.95.

Kids are naturally flexible, but they will lose that ability if they don't use it. This 30-minute disc is a fantastic way for adults and children to work on that flexibility together. There are several sequences from which to choose but little focus on form, but then here it's more about fun and togetherness than tradition. (See review, p. 85.)

YogaFit Plus. 45 min. UPC 8-26027-33109-1. **YogaFit Prenatal.** 75 min. UPC 8-26027-33199-2.

YogaFit Seniors. 55 min. UPC 8-26027-33129-9.

ea. vol: YogaFit, dist. by Victory Multimedia, sales@victorymultimedia.com. 2009. \$19.95.

In *YogaFit Plus*, instructor Darcy Bleszinski does a good job of modifying poses for overweight practitioners. *YogaFit Prenatal* instructor Beth Shaw expertly addresses the special considerations of pregnant women; a bonus postpartum section extends the disc's usefulness. And *YogaFit Senior* instructor Kathy De Kramer deftly walks seniors through simple poses emphasizing flexibility. A valuable section addresses the use of everyday props (e.g., towels, cans) to increase flexibility. ■

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