

Moves of the Month:

for Marathon Training!

By Mary Bange • Photos by Tricia Sweeney

MANY RUNNERS TRAINING FOR A MARATHON DISCOVER THAT AS THEY RUN LONGER DISTANCES, their body tires and their form collapses. Often the core is not strong enough to support proper running form, which can lead to injury and muscular imbalances. These imbalances can cause wear and tear that inhibits performance, possibly even sidelining the runner.

Pilates is an excellent form of cross-training for marathoners. It effectively develops muscles that stabilize the pelvis and strengthens the core to keep the body properly aligned. The method also improves flexibility. A strong, flexible core protects the back and absorbs the impact that comes from every step.

The following exercises blend stability and flexibility. Add them to your workout to help you run those 26.2 miles with less effort and risk of injury. See you at the finish line! **PS**



STEP 1

SIDE LEG LIFT

PURPOSE increases core stability; strengthens the lateral hip
SETUP Lie on your side, propped on your bottom elbow with your body stacked in one long line. Place the palm of your top hand in front of your body.

1. Lift and lower your top leg, keeping your leg straight, foot flexed, and pelvis and shoulders stable. Do 15–20 reps on each side.

ADVANCED Get into a Side Plank with your bottom knee bent, and lift and lower your leg for 15–20 more reps.

TABLE WITH MARCHING

PURPOSE strengthens the spinal extensors, glutes and hamstrings; improves upper-body flexibility by opening the chest and shoulders

SETUP Sit tall with your knees bent and feet hip-width apart on the floor. Place your hands shoulder-width apart about 6 inches behind your hips; your fingers can either be facing forward or to your sides.

1. Lift your hips toward the ceiling, creating a straight line from your shoulders to your hips to your knees, keeping your neck long.
2. Lift one leg to tabletop. Hold for 8 counts, keeping your hips even and your weight centered over both hands. Repeat with your other leg.
3. Alternate single-leg knee lifts while keeping your torso stable. Do 4 sets of 8 reps.

MODIFICATION From step 1, lower your hips to the floor, then return to tabletop.



SETUP



STEPS 1-2

ELEPHANT

PURPOSE enhances flexibility of the calves, hamstrings and lower back; challenges the core to stabilize the spine during limb movement

SETUP Stand with your feet hip-width apart, and place your palms about 8–12 inches in front of your feet (bend your knees as needed), fingertips together and forward, and head relaxed between your arms. Try to round your whole spine by lifting up with your abdominals.

1. Keeping your shoulders, spine and pelvis still, lift your toes, and step your right foot back and then your left. Return your right foot in and then your left.
2. Repeat, leading with your left leg. Do 8–10 reps.

MODIFICATION If your muscles are tight, place your hands on yoga blocks or a bench.



SETUP



STEP 1

SETUP



STEP 1



STEP 2.1



STEP 2.2



STAND AND TWIST

PURPOSE stretches the entire body, especially the hips and outer legs; challenges balance

SETUP Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart and turned out, arms hanging naturally by your sides.

1. Lift your heels as you raise your arms overhead.
2. Twist and turn your body 180 degrees to face the opposite direction. Deeply bend your front knee and wrap both hands around the ankle of your back leg, reaching your head toward your back knee.
3. Twist and spiral back to center with your arms reaching toward the ceiling.
4. Twist to your other side, then lower your heels. Do 3 more reps.

TIP Keep your feet parallel when you twist, and reach for your back ankle.

» Mary Bange is a former Olympic Marathon Trials qualifier and world-record holder at 50 kilometers. The PMA- and Peak Pilates-certified instructor teaches Pilates in Houston. For more information, visit www.marybange.com.