

Looking for a Pilates Teacher Training Program?

The landscape for Pilates Training is broad, varied, and growing. The exponential growth of Pilates offers potential teacher trainers a variety of educational options, but the large selection of potential schools, as well as the various program formats, can also cause confusion and frustration. The following offers potential students information regarding what they should consider in choosing a school.

There are some foundational questions potential students should consider:

- Are you a strong intermediate student?
- What are your career expectations?
- Why do you want to be an instructor?
- Are you familiar with the various schools of Pilates?
- Have you explored the costs related with teacher training?

These may seem like simple questions to some, but a comprehensive teacher-training program requires a serious commitment of time, money, and focus. Before enrolling in any program, candidates should explore all available options, as well as their personal level of intention. Potential instructors should be prepared physically, mentally, and financially and have adequate time to devote to their studies.

Choosing an education provider:

Personal preparedness.

The PMA recommends that students take a variety of lessons with various studios and lineages. There are many programs of study available from both large, international providers to small boutique schools. Each school will have its own brand, personality, and unique style of programming.

Attending a PMA conference supports an objective selection process. The annual Educational Conference provides a wonderful introduction to the Pilates industry. It is an inclusive meeting of industry professionals that facilitates networking with seasoned teachers as well as those who are new to the Pilates community. The variety of programming options offers exposure to different lineages and practices.

It is a fantastic way to interview schools, compare materials and fees, and try different brands of equipment. A small but useful investment involves taking a workshop before committing to a Comprehensive Teacher Training program. This allows a potential instructor the opportunity to confirm their choice of school, as well as interview the program/teacher.

Education providers:

In an unregulated industry, it is extremely important that students thoroughly research all available teacher-training options prior to making a commitment.

Comprehensive Pilates training should be the main objective. This should include: a minimum of 450 hours of lecture; observation; personal Pilates practice; apprenticeship; and supervised student teaching, covering Pilates exercise repertoire in Mat, Reformer, Trapeze Table, Barrels, Chairs, and Ped-o-Pull.

Program Director:

The PMA recommends that Program Directors be PMA certified and have a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience. Given that teaching clients is different from teaching potential instructors, some experience in presenting workshops and/or teacher training would be advised. Potential students should ask for the Director's credentials. A CV or documents related to their teaching experience would reveal the necessary qualifications.

Teachers:

Teacher trainers should be PMA Certified and have a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience before training new instructors. Observing a teacher in action for a few hours or a weekend is highly informative. Basic essentials include the instructor's delivery, skill set, personality and style.

Referrals are a powerful tool in the decision making process!

Format:

Pilates is a complex form of bodywork that cannot be taught online or in segments. To truly embrace this unique body of work the system needs to be learned as a cohesive whole.

Schools deliver comprehensive training in a variety of formats. Some cover the material in 10-13 consecutive days. Most programs consist of a series of modules. Potential instructors should determine what the format is, and whether or not additional workshops are required. Another valuable determiner is whether the program prepares students for the PMA exam (meaning the program is comprehensive, covering all apparatus and provides a minimum of 450 hours, including apprenticeship and completion of written and practical exams).

Costs:

Pre-requisites or auditions:

Some programs have pre-requisites such as an anatomy course or an audition, demonstrating mastery of the basic repertoire. These costs do not guarantee admission into the program. Potential students should be aware of any prerequisites and the related costs. In some cases, providers require a lengthy written application with application fee.

Tuition:

The Teacher Training Program should provide a complete and detailed list of tuition and fees required for graduation including course materials (manuals, handouts, DVD's, etc.) and final examination.

The quality of course materials varies greatly, from professional grade to homemade. Materials should be reviewed to determine if they are adequate resources that would compliment a new instructor's learning style. Potential students are encouraged to ask to review all required materials.

Apprenticeship: Personal Practice, Observation and Practice Teaching

Apprenticeship is the most valuable element of a comprehensive program. Potential students should assess the scope of apprenticeship that a program requires (the duration, timelines, and method of documentation). The PMA highly recommends programs that include apprenticeship.

Personal Practice:

Consistent personal practice (minimum 2 full sessions per week) should be included in all comprehensive programs. Some schools require a student to take a determined number of classes in addition to the teacher-training program. In such cases, it becomes important to ascertain how many hours are required, the possible additional costs, and related time commitment.

Observation:

Many schools include an observation requirement in their program. It is important to understand the parameters regarding who a student may observe (students, specific instructors, a variety of instructors), as well as where observation may take place i.e. a specific studio, a selection of studios, studios that teach a specific lineage etc.

Practice Teaching:

Most schools require students to complete practice teaching hours. It is important to ascertain whom the student may train (other students, friends and family, clients at a discounted rate), and who is supervising. Another related issue is whether the student pays for these hours, or if they are paid.

Examination Process:

All programs should require a written and a practical exam. It is important for a potential student to know the fees, passing score, pass rates and retesting procedures and related fees.

Special Situations: a very important issue

A potential student should become familiar with the policies related to situations that would cause a student to drop from the program (illness, pregnancy, job loss).

In such cases, would the school require a complete restart of the program? In the case of a move, could credit be transferred to an affiliated school? Similarly, does the school accept credits from other schools? This sort of bridge transference of credits gives the potential student insight regarding the school's position within the scheme of working for the good of the student. In the unfortunate situation where the student and teacher relationship sours, what is the policy? In general, a thorough understanding of the school's transfer of credit and refund policies is essential.

The PMA discourages work/study for teacher training.

Continuing Education:

Upon graduation, students should receive a diploma or certificate from their school. Graduates may participate in continuing education with their school on a voluntary basis. Schools that require continuing education to maintain their certificate or diploma are not following industry norms related to the notion of true certification, third party certification. This does not mean that such schools do not offer quality programs, but it does suggest graduates will have to continue with the school's approach as opposed to expanding their knowledge base beyond the school's philosophies. In addition, this practice creates a conflict of interest that is not in the best interests of the student/graduate. Students who choose this sort of program should explore locations that make continuing education readily available.

Support Services:

Some schools offer post-graduate support to their students. Examples include job postings, web listings, equipment discounts, and placement assistance.

Students should consider the school's reputation. Is the school's certificate recognized in the local community and in the Pilates industry? Does the school have a high placement percentage? How were these percentages determined?

It is the potential student's responsibility to gather this information. In some cases, schools may not know placement percentages. This in itself may be indicative of their commitment to the students.

Before commencing with teacher training, the school should present potential students with a contract, inclusive of the topics enumerated above. The contract should be easy to read, and present all pertinent information.