

squeeze please

Round out your workout with the versatile Magic Circle

Whether you've hit a plateau with your matwork or want to work more deeply, a Magic Circle can help take your Pilates practice to the next level. This simple piece of equipment can be used to strengthen the legs, arms and, of course, the core. (For Magic Circle exercises, see "Lower Body Makeover" on page 36.) When choosing a Magic Circle, don't pick one that is so rigid that you're unable to bend it; generally, you should be able to compress it slightly and feel a gentle burn toward the end of each set.

When using a Magic Circle:

- Lift the pelvic floor and squeeze the Magic Circle on exhalation.
- Keep elbows and knees slightly bent.
- Remember that slow, controlled, fluid movements are more challenging than fast, percussive squeezes.
- Don't hold your breath; keep it moving as much as possible.
- Establish a rhythm in your movement; give each exercise a tempo or listen to music with a moderate beat during your workout.
- Develop your workout slowly and build toward streamlining one exercise into the next.

— Kim Gibilisco

1. Gaiam's sleek Pilates BodyRing has two molded pads and offers a medium to high level of resistance. \$30 with video, gaiam.com

2. The light- to medium-resistance Pilates Magic Circle by Stamina Products has exterior and interior pads for two types of resistance. \$29.99 with video, staminaproducts.com

3. The heavy-duty Flex Ring Toner by Balanced Body comes with removable pads and offers a medium to high level of resistance. \$69, pilates.com

4. The Pilates Power Ring Pro by Spri Products offers light to medium resistance and is fully padded. \$29.99, spriproducts.com

5. Aeromat's Pilates Ring is a lightweight, 14" circle with medium resistance. \$19.99, aeromats.com

6. The yellow medium-resistance Power Circle by Peak Pilates features cushy exterior pads. \$60, peakpilates.com

7. Stott Pilates' Fitness Circle Lite has a 14" diameter and a low level of resistance. \$33.95, stotpilates.com

8. The fully padded Pilates Ring from Power Systems offers moderate resistance. \$29.95, power-systems.com