

# this year's gear

sorting through a slew of new products can be daunting, so we went to the source—and asked the pros to pick the hottest equipment and trends for 2010

BY CAROL KIM

When Joe Pilates developed his eponymous system in the 1920s, he fashioned his apparatus using whatever was at hand—hospital beds, wheelchairs, springs and traction devices. His equipment was critical to his method and helped encourage the proper

## less is more

“Value is the prevailing theme for 2010,” says Beth Gibbs-Bartel, director of sales, marketing and retail at STOTT PILATES®. “Customers are aiming to get the biggest bang for their buck. Whether they are buying Kits, Power Packs or Bundles, we’ve learned that our customers love receiving everything that they need in one complete package—with additional savings too. Economical props like the Flex-Band® Stability Ball™ and Fitness Circle® can be used hundreds of ways and are great for at-home and professional studios alike.”

Business and program directors responding to an IDEA survey report small, portable and versatile props such as resistance tubing or bands, stability balls, foam rollers, balance equipment and medicine balls are growing in popularity. Not only can they be used in myriad ways, but

they are also a fraction of the cost of larger equipment.

“We’ve seen an increase in accounts that are leasing smaller spaces and buying more space-efficient equipment like portable Reformers, Chairs and Arcs,” confirms Lynne Johnson, senior marketing manager at Balanced Body in Sacramento, CA. “The success of our Exo Chair is a strong indicator of this trend.” The latest version of



COURTESY OF PEAK PILATES

Peak Pilates  
MVe Chair

alignment while strengthening muscles and increasing flexibility.

While Pilates equipment remains fundamentally unchanged, it has become much more sophisticated. Manufacturers know that the economy is foremost on everyone’s mind, so they have begun to offer more multitasking pieces, space-saving equipment and versatile additions for existing apparatus. So what are the important trends for the coming year? Here’s what the major equipment companies had to say.

## Balanced Body's Pilates Arc



COURTESY OF BALANCED BODY

equipment

## Balanced Body's Allegro Reformer



COURTESY OF BALANCED BODY

the Chair has a split-pedal option (\$895, [pilates.com](http://pilates.com)), which allows practitioners to perform many exer-

cises that could previously only be done on a Reformer. But it takes up only a fraction of the space needed

for a full-size Reformer—and carries a much smaller price tag.

Forty-four percent of business and program directors responding to the IDEA survey currently offer Pilates equipment; 40 percent believe usage will grow. Peak Pilates of Boulder, CO, reports a strong response to its stackable MVe Chair (\$750, [peakpilates.com](http://peakpilates.com)), making it a great choice for group classes in studios or health clubs. This enables instructors to provide equipment-based training at a lower cost than private sessions.

### creative add-ons

“Customers are trying to be creative with what they have, whether from a class programming standpoint or an apparatus one,” says Balanced Body’s Johnson. “For example, progressive studios are offering more group classes and gearing them toward specific groups, such as golfers or tennis players.”

To facilitate this change on the equipment front, manufacturers have developed a variety of accessories that spice up their classes and add a new dimension to their private sessions. “Studios are purchasing more props to incorporate functional training and keep their classes fresh and fun so people keep coming back,” says Denise Anderson, marketing manager at Peak Pilates. A bonus, of course, is that props are much less expensive than new apparatus.

For instance, Peak recently took over the marketing and programming of the Pilatesstick (\$150, [peakpilates.com](http://peakpilates.com)), a portable system that allows you to do the work traditionally reserved for a wall system or Cadillac. Studios can attach them to ballet bars or wall mounts for group classes, which are more affordable for students (but still profitable for studios). Another example is Balanced Body’s Pilates Arc (\$159, [pilates.com](http://pilates.com)), which you can use alone or slide on top of the Reformer to create more exercise options.

## how to maintain your equipment

**New props and pieces are great, but they won't be new forever. Careful maintenance is needed to ensure the longevity of your existing apparatus. Here are few tips:**

### AFTER EACH USE

Clean the vinyl with a cloth moistened with a mild disinfectant to extend the life of the upholstery. The pros at Stott Pilates recommend using a water-diluted tea tree oil solution. “Keep a spray bottle handy in order to make this a common practice,” advises Gibbs-Bartel.

Release the pedals, springs or straps slowly when dismounting—don’t let them snap back—to avoid damaging the apparatus.

### WEEKLY

Wipe down the upholstery with a mild solution of soap and water. Remember to test it first on a small area on the underside of a piece of equipment.

Clean the tracks and wheels with a soft cloth and gentle cleaner. For

wheels, hold the cloth against them as you’re moving the carriage.

### MONTHLY

Test screws and bolts. If you can turn the bolt with your fingers, it’s too loose. To avoid overtightening, Balanced Body suggests using only your index and middle finger on the handle of the wrench instead of your entire hand.

Inspect springs. There should be no gaps and kinks between the coils when a spring is at rest. To prolong longevity, rotate springs of the same weight every few months so they wear more evenly.

### EVERY TWO YEARS

Manufacturers highly recommend that you replace your springs every two years to ensure maximum performance and safety.

**Pilates for Athletic Conditioning Kit from STOTT PILATES®**



COURTESY OF STOTT PILATES® MERRITHW CORPORATION

equipment

Newcomer Root Manufacturing, produced by Colorado's Hart Wood Inc.—the former manufacturer Peak Pilates' apparatus—offers Reformers that are designed to be retrofitted with Cadillacs (\$5,499 and up; [rootmfg.com](http://rootmfg.com)) or half Towers (\$4,799). "It makes sense economically," says Patti Sansone, a Root sales consultant and certified Pilates teacher. This way, you can start small (and less expensively) and add on as you go. As your needs change, you can modify pole systems, strap configurations, rolling resistance and carriage height. "It's flexible and versatile," she adds.

**modifications for students with special needs**

As more professional athletes (from tiny gymnasts to extra-large weight-lifters) and special populations turn to Pilates, equipment can no longer be one-size-fits-all, says Sansone. "In physical-therapy

**\$ how to outfit a gym in different price ranges \$**

**EQUIPMENT UNDER \$50**

**Magic Circle.** "It aids in alignment and proper form—you can use it on your legs or arms, and it keeps them straight so you don't have one higher or lower than the other," says Kathryn Ross-Nash.

**DVDs.** "Peter Fiasca, Mari Winsor and Romana Kryzanowska are fabulous instructors," says Ross-Nash. "Their DVDs offer great instruction and a good workout."

**Foam roller.** "It's fantastic because you can use it for a ton of exercises and use it for muscle relief," says Zayna Gold of Boston Body Pilates.

**UNDER \$300**

All of the above, plus:  
**Portable mat.** "It's imperative that you keep your spine protected while doing Pilates," says Ross-Nash. "Invest in a proper

one that has handles and a strap for your feet."

**Foam arc.** You can use it as a spine corrector and as an exercise arc.

**SKY'S THE LIMIT**

All of the above, plus:  
**Exo Chair.** "Both a pro and someone who's never done Pilates can get a whole-body workout with it," says Gold. "It's so popular that people are wait-listed to take that class at our studios."

**Allegro Tower of Power.** "It has the Reformer, mat station and Tower, yet the exercises don't require a lot of choreography," says Gold. "It's basic but still gives you a good workout. Plus you're higher off the ground so it's great for people who aren't super flexible. It allows them to do a lot more."

## Reformer/Tower Combination Unit from Root Manufacturing



### the pros' fave manufacturers

**Kimberly and Katherine Corp of Pilates on Fifth in NYC on why they chose STOTT PILATES:** “We loved the sturdy ride of the Reformer, the durability of the equipment and the streamlined design. We’re going into our 10th year of owning Stott Pilates equipment, and every piece still looks terrific! We can’t tell the older from the newer.”

**Nicole Dooley Collet of the Pilates Boutique in Brooklyn, NY, on why she’s a fan of Peak:** “I love the way it feels on my body through the Pilates repertoire. Plus you have so many options and flexibility with the equipment. You can tailor a session to a specific person just by adjusting the settings or trying an exercise on the chair instead of the Reformer.”

**Kathryn Ross-Nash of American Body Tech in New Jersey on why she loves Gratz:** “The Gratz spring doesn’t have tension in that last inch, so it makes you work, as opposed to the apparatus doing it for you. Also, you can have a seamless workout for 50 minutes and build strength and stretch because you don’t have

to worry about changing the springs, arcs and cords.”

**Zayna Gold from Boston Body Pilates in Belmont and Newbury, MA, on why she’s devoted to Balanced Body:** “It has a smooth resistance, so it feels easier on the joints but is actually harder on the muscles; it gives me more of a core workout. Also, Balanced Body operates their company like a small business even though it’s a huge company. They have amazing service and always respond if I have a question. Additionally, we wanted a beautiful line of equipment, and they were available in the serene green hue that we wanted!”

**Roberta Kirschenbaum of Rolates Pilates in NYC on why she likes to mix and match:** “Each of the manufacturers offers unique benefits. I’m fortunate to be in Joseph and Clara Pilates’ original space, so I thought it would be a nice honor to have a bit from all the suppliers. I remember Kathy Grant saying to me that it doesn’t matter all that much what equipment you chose, as it’s your body that does the work.”

settings, they need wider and higher models so the client doesn’t have to struggle to get on the apparatus. Athletes and obese clients also need larger models so their skin doesn’t get pinched between the carriage and the frame.” Root offers Reformers (\$3,299 and up) and Cadillacs (\$3,458 and up) in four sizes—and can build them to users’ specifications. Additional adaptations are available. For clients with mobility issues, Sansone adds, “end-mount and side-mount poles make more sense.”

### home-studio options

For those not yet ready to make the plunge to a major piece of apparatus, props are a great addition. “At-home exercisers are simulating their studio workouts with props and light accessories in the comfort of their own home,” notes Gibbs-Bartel. With this in mind, Stott Pilates created the Pilates for Athletic Conditioning Workout Kit (\$35, [stottpilates.com](http://stottpilates.com)). It contains two 2-lb. toning balls, one extra strength flex-band and three training DVDs.

### focus on feet

Kathryn Ross-Nash of American Body Tech in New Jersey started an event called Fix the Foot because a lot of people—whether they’re dancers or women who live in high heels—have painful foot issues. “This is an affordable, therapeutic way to connect the classical Pilates methods to today’s needs,” she says.

David Rosencrans, president of Gratz Pilates in Long Island City, NY, agrees that feet are getting a lot of attention. “Props like the Foot Corrector (\$175, [pilates-gratz.com](http://pilates-gratz.com)) and Toe Exerciser (\$90, [pilates-gratz.com](http://pilates-gratz.com)) are picking up in popularity,” he reports.



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