

How to Become a Pilates Instructor

Choose mat or comprehensive training, pick a school, and decide if you want the NPCP exam. The National Pilates Certification Program sets hours, exam fees and renewal rules.

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You train with a school, then you may sit an independent exam. Schools set their own course names and fees. The exam rules come from the National Pilates Certification Program (NPCP).

Two routes: mat and comprehensive

- **Mat:** teaches the floor work. NPCP asks for a mat teacher education of at least 100 hours.
- **Comprehensive:** teaches the mat and the apparatus. NPCP asks for at least 450 hours. NPCP lists the mat plus the reformer, the trapeze table (Cadillac), the chair and the barrels.

Candidates must be 18 or older. Read our guide on mat versus reformer Pilates if you are not sure which to teach.

The NPCP exam

NPCP offers a Comprehensive exam and a Mat exam. It does not run a school. The NPCP FAQ gives these facts:

| | Comprehensive | Mat | | --- | --- | --- | | Exam | 125 multiple-choice questions, 3 hours | 100 multiple-choice questions, 2.5 hours | | Fee | \$300 | \$225 | | Renewal | 16 NPCP-approved CECs | 8 NPCP-approved CECs |

The fee covers the exam and the first two years of certification. Testing outside the US and Canada adds \$105. You earn CECs in each two-year period. They do not roll over. You can sit the exam at a test centre or online with a live proctor.

NPCP accepts graduates of any program that meets its rules. A school does not need approval or accreditation. NPCP says membership in a professional association is not required.

A change in 2027

NPCP says updated Comprehensive rules start on January 1, 2027. Repertoire and special populations each need an in-person or live virtual piece. Graduates of programs that fall short get a six-month grace period to apply. Check the NPCP page before you sign up for an online-only course.

Choose a school

These schools run their own teacher training. The pages we read did not give hours or prices. Ask each school for them in writing, and ask if the course meets the NPCP rules.

- **Merrithew (STOTT PILATES):** lists Matwork, Reformer, Cadillac-Chair-Barrels and Injuries and Special Populations. Full Certification means finishing all of them, the advanced repertoire and an exam.
- **Balanced Body:** lists Mat, Reformer, Mat and Reformer, Pilates Apparatus and other courses. It has an education finder.
- **BASI Pilates:** lists Comprehensive, Mat and Reformer, and Mat programs.
- **Polestar Pilates:** lists Comprehensive, Reformer and Mat teacher training, plus bridging and continuing education.

The Pilates Method Alliance is a professional association. It is not a school and not the exam body.

After the course

1. Buy liability insurance before you teach any client, paid or free. Supervised hours inside your program are the only exception.
2. Practise-teach with real clients. Many programs include supervised hours.
3. Decide on the NPCP exam.
4. Keep earning CECs if you certify.

Teacher training

Other teacher guides: [yoga](#), [barre](#), [aerial](#), [pole fitness](#) and [hoop dance](#).

Frequently asked questions

Do I need the NPCP exam to teach Pilates?

NPCP describes its exam as verification of competency. Whether you need it depends on the studio and on your insurer. Ask both before you pay.

Is NPCP the same as the Pilates Method Alliance?

No. The NPCP FAQ says the Pilates Method Alliance has no part in workshop approval or certification. The Alliance is a professional association.

Can I take the exam after an online course?

Only if the program meets the NPCP rules. Some parts need an in-person or live virtual piece. A school can tell you if its program qualifies.

Sources

[National Pilates Certification Program: comprehensive requirements](https://nationalpilatescertificationprogram.org/NPCP/Get_Certified/Requirements/NPCP/Get_Certified/Requirements.aspx) — https://nationalpilatescertificationprogram.org/NPCP/Get_Certified/Requirements/NPCP/Get_Certified/Requirements.aspx

[National Pilates Certification Program: FAQ](https://nationalpilatescertificationprogram.org/NPCP/FAQ.aspx) — <https://nationalpilatescertificationprogram.org/NPCP/FAQ.aspx>

[Pilates Method Alliance](https://pilatesmethodalliance.org/) — <https://pilatesmethodalliance.org/>

[Merrithew: STOTT PILATES certification programs](https://www.merrithew.com/instructor-training/pilates-certification-programs) — <https://www.merrithew.com/instructor-training/pilates-certification-programs>

[Balanced Body: find Pilates training](https://www.pilates.com/pilates-training-near-me/) — <https://www.pilates.com/pilates-training-near-me/>

[BASI Pilates](https://www.basipilates.com/) — <https://www.basipilates.com/>

Polestar Pilates — <https://www.polestarpilates.com/>