

How to Start a Pilates Studio

Size the room by reformer count, price the equipment from quotes, hire certified teachers, insure the studio and check local rules. A step-by-step guide with official sources and one dated price example.

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A reformer studio runs on its machines. Each machine is one place in a class, so the equipment list sets your room, your budget and your revenue. This guide covers the steps that differ from other studios.

Step 1: Choose your studio type

- **Mat studio:** low equipment cost. See our guide on mat versus reformer Pilates.
- **Reformer studio:** a group room of machines. Classes are small.
- **Apparatus studio:** reformers, plus tower, chair and barrels for private sessions. Merrithew lists Cadillac, chair and barrel courses for teachers, so you can hire for these.

Step 2: Plan the room by reformer count

1. Decide the class size you want to teach. Small groups give each student attention.
2. Count one reformer for each place.
3. Measure the room. Leave space around each machine to walk, to step on and off, and for the teacher to reach every student.
4. Ask each maker for the machine's footprint and ask your teachers how much room they need.

A smaller class costs less to equip. It earns less per class. Check the sum in your plan.

Step 3: Price the equipment

Do not trust a rule of thumb. Get written quotes from at least two makers, such as Balanced Body and Merrithew, and from a dealer. Ask what the quote includes: the footbar, box, jump board, springs, legs, upholstery colour, delivery and set-up.

One example, labelled as an example: in October 2026 Gymstore listed a refurbished Balanced Body Allegro 2 at \$3,999, plus \$499 fixed shipping and a 90-day parts warranty. Balanced Body's own page for the Allegro 2 lists a 10-year frame warranty and a 30-day money-back guarantee. It does not show a price and tells buyers to contact a local representative. Your cost will differ.

Add the SBA's cost categories to your sheet: space, equipment and supplies, utilities, licences and permits, insurance, lawyer and accountant, staff pay and marketing. The SBA says to count at least one year of monthly costs. See our guide on how to start a yoga studio for the plan and lease steps. They are the same for Pilates.

Step 4: Hire certified teachers

Pilates teachers train with schools. NPCP runs an independent exam. The NPCP FAQ says Comprehensive candidates need at least 450 hours of teacher education. Mat candidates need at least 100 hours. NPCP says the Pilates Method Alliance has no part in its workshop approval or certification.

For your hiring rule, decide:

- Mat teacher or comprehensive teacher, by class type
- What proof you want: school certificate, NPCP certification, or both
- Whether the teacher keeps up education. NPCP renewal needs 16 CECs (Comprehensive) or 8 (Mat) every two years.

Read our guide on how to tell a good instructor. Watch a trial class.

Step 5: Insurance

The SBA lists general liability and professional liability insurance. Rules for workers' compensation, unemployment and disability insurance differ by state or province and apply when you have employees. Ask your state or provincial labour office what applies to you. Tell the insurer you have reformers and any other apparatus, and ask what proof of training it needs from each teacher. Ask about equipment cover too.

Step 6: Licences and local rules

The SBA says most small businesses need a mix of federal, state and local licences and permits. It says local governments handle zoning. Check the address before you sign a lease. Other countries: use your government's business registration site.

Step 7: Price and sell

Reformer classes cost more to run, because the room holds fewer students. Set the drop-in, pack and membership prices from your sheet. Read our guide on intro offers, class packs and memberships. Booking software must handle fixed machine numbers and a waitlist, so test it before you buy.

Step 8: Maintain the equipment

Write a schedule. Inspect springs, straps, ropes and upholstery before each day's first class. Follow the maker's care instructions. Replace worn parts at once. Keep a log.

Frequently asked questions

How many reformers does a studio need?

One reformer holds one student. The number of reformers sets your class size and your income per class. Plan the room around the machines you can fit with safe space between them.

How much does a reformer cost?

It depends on the model, the seller and whether it is new. One retailer listed a refurbished Balanced Body Allegro 2 at \$3,999 plus \$499 shipping in October 2026. Get written quotes from the makers.

Must my teachers be certified?

Your insurer and your own standard decide. Ask your insurer what proof of training it needs. Certification by NPCP is one option.

Sources

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[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/>

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