

strengthen your trunk with the elephant

Use the variation that's right for you

With a name like the Elephant, it's obvious that this Reformer exercise packs a big punch. Don't be fooled by the leggy look of it, though—the effort is in your abdominal muscles, not your appendages. There are three levels of difficulty, including two Elephant variations, so you can reap the benefits of this move no matter what your Pilates proficiency. Concentrate on mastering the basic exercise first. As your stability, strength and flexibility increase, try the intermediate and advanced variations.

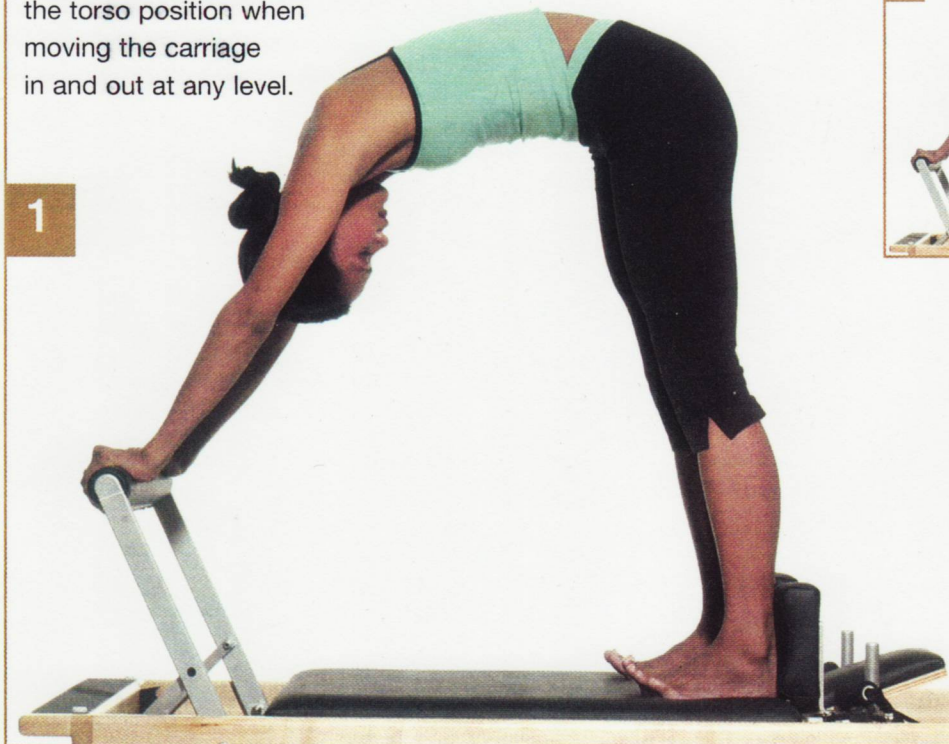
Elephant Checklist

- Place your hands in a supportive and comfortable position on the footbar, shoulder-width apart
- Allow your head to hang down
- Draw up the abdominals to round the spine
- Anchor the shoulders and draw them down your back, away from your ears
- Keep your arms straight and torso stationary throughout the exercise
- Do not let your shoulders or hips rotate
- Use your abdominals to power your legs out and in

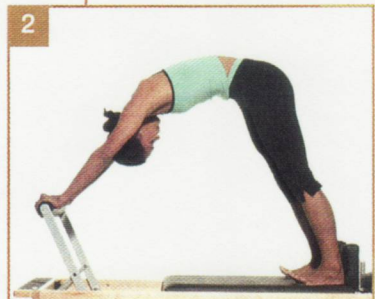
Basic SUGGESTED SPRINGS: 2

The basic Elephant demonstrates the torso position when moving the carriage in and out at any level.

1



2



STEP 1

Start by standing on the Reformer with your heels pressed against the shoulder rests, hands grasping the footbar and abdominals scooped in, creating a C-curve with your back.

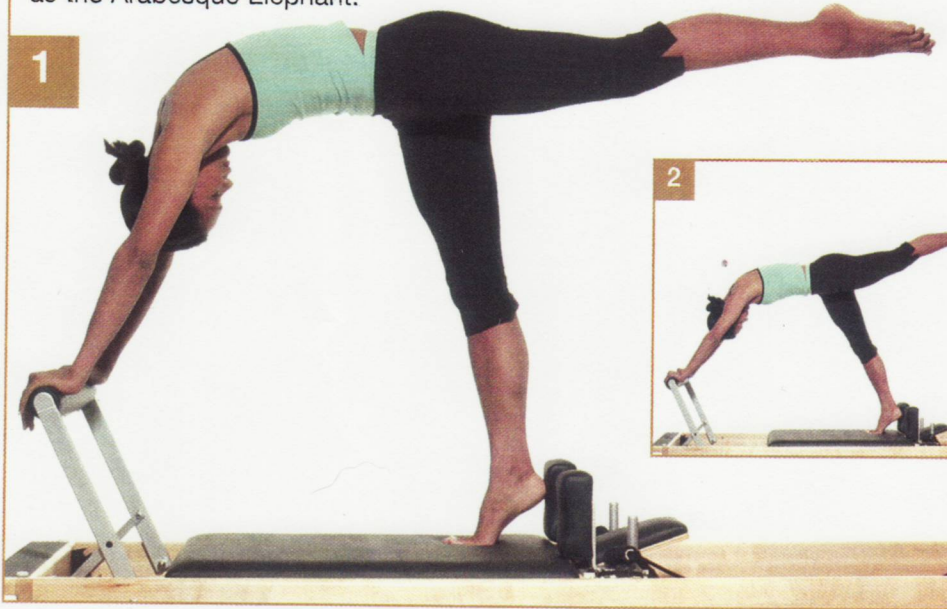
STEP 2

Inhale and push the carriage out with your legs, maintaining the position of your upper body (your hips shouldn't shift back, just your legs). Exhale and bring the carriage back in. The tempo is fast out, slow in. Repeat 3 to 8 times on each leg.

Blossom Leilani Crawford is a protégé of Pilates elder Kathy Grant and was certified by Romana Kryzanowska. She lives in New York City where she dances and teaches Pilates.

Intermediate **SUGGESTED SPRINGS: 2**

For a more challenging pose, try a variation of the Elephant known as the Arabesque Elephant.



STEP 1

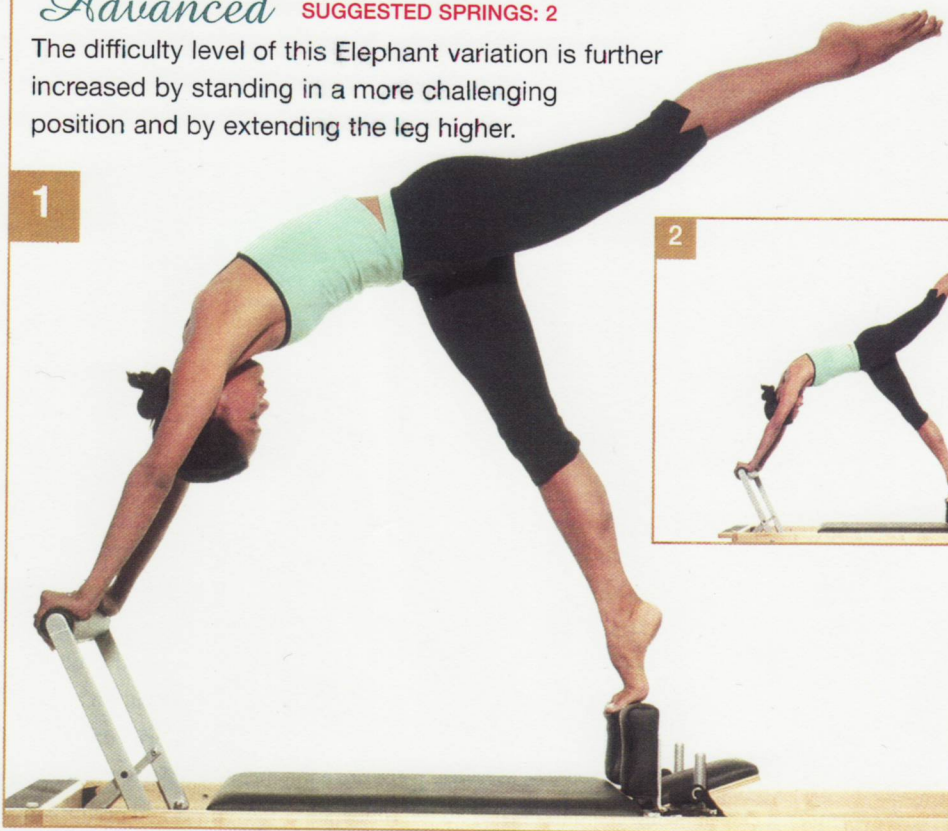
Begin in the basic Elephant starting position. Rise to the balls of your feet just high enough to press your heels against the middle of the shoulder rests. Transfer your weight to your right leg, using your abdominal muscles to stabilize your torso. Extend the left leg to the back, raising it to hip level. Keep the arms straight and equally weighted.

STEP 2

Inhale and push the carriage out with your right leg, maintaining the position of your upper body and keeping your left leg high. Exhale and slightly raise the left leg as you move the carriage back in. Bring the left leg down, then repeat with the right leg extended. The tempo is fast out, slow in. Repeat 3 to 8 times on each leg.

Advanced **SUGGESTED SPRINGS: 2**

The difficulty level of this Elephant variation is further increased by standing in a more challenging position and by extending the leg higher.



STEP 1

Start in the basic Elephant starting position. Reposition yourself so that you are standing on the top of the shoulder stands on the balls of your feet with your heels lifted high. When you feel comfortable in this position, transfer your weight to your right leg. Stabilize your torso with your abdominal muscles, then slowly raise your left leg to the back, lifting it above the hip. Keep the arms straight and equally weighted.

STEP 2

Inhale and gently push the carriage out, taking care not to move your torso or extended leg. Exhale and keep reaching the left leg up as you bring the carriage back in slowly, keeping your hips even. Repeat 3 to 8 times on each leg.

Reformer Workout Videos

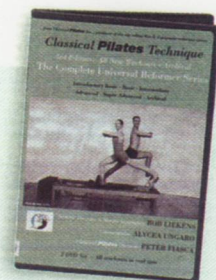
See page 95 for where to buy these instructional videos.—Ed.

Allegro 2 Advanced Training

Learn a broad Reformer repertoire (including the Elephant) with this video from The Pilates Coach. (VHS; The Pilates Coach)

Classical Pilates Technique

"The Complete Universal Reformer Series" includes workouts for all levels. (DVD; Classical Pilates)



COLIN FOWLER