

## Lori's Top 10 Home Studio Props

1. **A Mat**—The ideal mat for Pilates is slightly thicker than a typical yoga mat. I prefer a mat that is about 1/2" thick and is therefore very comfortable for both kneeling and quadruped (hands and knees) exercises. However, a thicker mat can be more difficult to balance on so keep that in mind. I usually stand on the floor for balance work and transition onto the mat for the rest. You can also stack mats so if you have a thin yoga mat already, placing it on another mat or even a carpeted floor may give you enough cushion. Look for a mat that is "non slip".
2. **Theraband or Tubing**— Resistance bands are a great pilates tool. They offer both assistance and resistance, often during the same exercise. The wide bands tend to be more comfortable and stable around feet, ankles and thighs. Tubing tends to be more durable and usually comes with handles. I like to buy Theraband in 2 colors (Red and Green work for most people) in a 6 yard roll. I cut one 5' strip to use long and another about 3' to tie into a loop. Each box will make about 2 sets. Amazon carries Theraband for about \$15/box.
3. **Foam Roller**—I use a foam roller for much more than rolling out sore muscles (although it certainly works for that!) Exercises on the roller encourage both mobility and stability of the spine, challenge balance and strength and promote relaxation of tight muscle. I find a full length (36"x6") medium to firm density roller the most versatile. They do come in a variety of densities and if you are new to using them, or have any spine pathology or sensitivity, opt for medium density. If a roller is too firm, it can be helpful to lay a blanket over it for extra cushioning.
4. **Balls**—1) Small and squishy- any small ball will work for some exercises but one with a little air released from it can provide a lot of feel good support AND challenge. The right level of "squish" is a ball that you can lean into without it rolling away. 2) Fitball— something large enough for you to sit on, 55cm is ideal for most bodies. Lots of ways to use this size ball!
5. **A belt or strap**— Nothing to purchase here! It's nice to have a firm strap nearby for support while stretching.
6. **A hand towel**— Another "studio" prop you are likely to have already. I keep a hand towel folded lengthwise in thirds to use as head support for upper abdominal work. Also great for improving trunk rotation
7. **Small pillow**— keep one nearby to allow your cervical spine to rest in neutral when you are lying on your back. I can help you determine the best place to put it.
8. **Bolster or cushion to sit on**—couch cushions, firm pillows, folded blankets, even a very low footstool can work to help you keep an upright posture while seated on the floor. Being elevated takes stress off both the hips and low back.
9. **Hand weights**— you've probably heard this one before but it's true! Soup cans, water bottles, shampoo bottles... every home is filled with hand weights. If you're inclined to acquire "official" weights, get a fairly light (1#-3#) pair that looks comfortable to hold. I like those covered in neoprene as they're not slippery but there are lots of good ones available. As your strength increases so should the weight you are lifting!
10. **Magic Circle**— it IS magic! A Magic Circle is one of the original tools created by Joseph Pilates to help you connect to your center more easily and effectively. Also called a Pilates Ring or Fitness Circle, they come in a variety of styles. I prefer one that has pads both inside and outside the circle.

