

PILATES CLASS

MAGIC CIRCLE MAT CLASS AT POWER PILATES

Multiple locations; see powerpilates.com

Without the resistance supplied by the Cadillac and the Reformer—the tension-generating equipment typically used in pricey private sessions—it's easy to go through the motions with Pilates. In mat classes, students often find themselves lazily pointing and flexing through “side kicks” but not truly connecting to their “powerhouse” (abs and torso, in Pilates parlance). That's where the Magic Circle comes in. This flexible rubber ring was one of Joseph Pilates's original creations, but these days it's underutilized. When it's positioned between your inner thighs, the pressure required to squeeze it in place forces you to engage your abs; if you squeeze it between your outstretched arms, it will challenge your upper chest and shoulder muscles. At \$15 a class, it's an excellent way to raise the intensity and effectiveness of a Pilates workout—without raising the price.