

This Month's Focus: Arms and Posture

1. Port de Bras with Light Weights. For this exercise, students may use light weights. Backs should remain long. Necks should be long. Shoulders should be relaxed. Go through the four OUB Port de Bras with weights. Next, do them without weights and see how much lighter the arms feel!

2. Arm and Neck Stretch. Stretch the right arm across the body. Repeat left. Stretch the right arm bent and behind the head (so the left arm pulls the right elbow, which is behind the head, to the left to create a stretch). Repeat left. Clasp both arms behind the back and stretch them. Bend forward to continue to stretch them, if desired. Next, stretch the neck. Tilt the head to the left, using the left hand on the head to gently stretch the right side of the neck. Repeat left. Tilt the head forward to stretch the back of the neck. Look right, left, right, and left.

3. Side-Lying Twists. Students should lie on their backs with their legs extended straight on the floor. Lift the right knee into a parallel retiré. Twist over to the left while keeping the upper body as flat as possible on the floor with the arms extended directly side. Look to the right. Hold for about 20 seconds. Optional: Extend the right leg straight instead of leaving it in retiré. Come back to center. Repeat on the other side. The point of this exercise is to stretch the upper bodies and open up the chest.

4. Seated (or Lying) Port de Bras. Students begin sitting on a Pilates ball. The legs are in a parallel chair position. Students do the four OUB Port de Bras *slowly*, pausing in each position to check the shape of the arms and posture of the upper back, shoulders, and collar bone. If you don't have Pilates balls for your students, you can also have them lie on their backs to do this exercise.

5. Band Work. Students should hold a Theraband across their upper backs and the backs of their arms in 2nd position. Close the arms to 1st position and open to 2nd position, while holding the Theraband. Do 8 reps. Next, students should sit on their Theraband, holding it with their arms in 2nd position. They should have more slack in their bands than in the earlier set because they will be moving their arms to 5th position. Carry the arms to 5th position, then open to 2nd position while holding the Theraband. Do 8 reps.