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The Ins and Outs of Barre Classes

The skinny on this fast growing workout method

06/03/2013 | By [Teresa Tobat](#)



"Teachers often will instruct students to move up an inch and down an inch—and they mean that literally."

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BARRE INSTRUCTOR DISHES ON WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE METHOD BEHIND THE "BARRE" MADNESS THAT IS SWEEPING D.C.

Barre classes have been popping up all over the Washington, D.C. area. [Pure Barre](#) opened in April in D.C., the [Bar Method Bethesda](#) was in business in February and just in the past year, both [Lava Barre](#) and the [Barre Code](#)—now call Northern Virginia home.

If you're not familiar with barre, it's a ballet, Pilates and yoga hybrid workout. Students perform small, isometric movements at the, you guessed, ballet barre that aim to sculpt and a long, lean dancer's physique.

It's no surprise to Rachel Wilson, a barre instructor at D.C.'s [b.fit studio](#), as to why barre has taken off.



Picture courtesy of Teresa Tobat and b.fit studio

“When people see their bodies change, they don’t want to stop,” Wilson says. “You’re getting results in such a compressed period of time. I can work out an hour a day four to five times a week and get results comparable to running six miles a day and lifting weights at the gym for hours.”

Wilson is a barre success story. As a former division-one college basketball player, Wilson was initially skeptical about barre, but after being introduced to the method, attended class as often as twice a day.

“I went from a [size] 12 to an eight. I never thought I’d be an eight,” Wilson says. “I feel like my body looks ten times better now than when I worked out for four hours a day.”

Wilson says that classes are typically broken down into a general warm up, followed by moves that work the arms, thighs, seat, abs and a final stretch.

Each exercise focuses on one specific area of the body until it’s fatigued (In Wilson’s words, “It’s meant to burn.”) and is followed by stretches to sculpt a more toned, lengthened figure. Movements are small. Teachers often will instruct students to move up an inch and down an inch—and they mean that literally.

“You’re leaning out the muscles by doing these tiny movements,” Wilson says, often to great results. “Clients often notice that when they come three times a week for a month or two months, they drop a dress size, maybe two dress sizes.”

Wilson notes that to really see the full effects of what barre has to offer, students should not only attend class three to four times a week, but also combine it with a healthy diet.

Her tips for new students include paying careful attention to instructors, who call out general corrections to help clients attain good form. “When you really take heed to those cues, you’ll figure out how to get into the right position faster,” Wilson says.

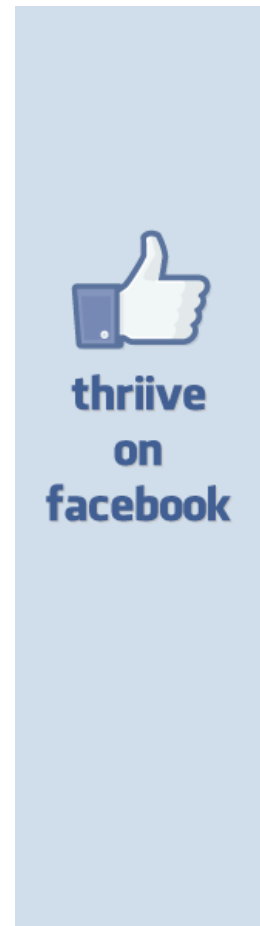
She also recommends that novice students come to the barre with a positive attitude to make the overall experience more enjoyable.

For more advanced practitioners, Wilson suggests they ask themselves how they can strengthen a specific position and get feedback from teachers. For instance, can you pull your heel closer to your seat? Can you straighten your leg fully? She also advises that they come into more advanced positions before the instructor calls for them.





Let’s say that the instructor usually invites everyone to perform the last 10 seconds of an exercise on the ball of the foot instead of on the floor. Well, instead of waiting for the cue, go into the advanced move when you feel ready. Wilson also says that students should try not to come out of a specific position during the exercise or they risk losing benefits from it.

Teresa Tobat is a Northern Virginia-based writer and editor and former out-of-shape student turned studio-goer. When she’s not visiting one of the D.C. metro area’s many studios, she’s usually playing with her two long-haired Chihuahuas. View her personal website [here](#).

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