Principles of the Essentrics Program

by Miranda Esmonde-White
Principles of the ESSENTRICS™ Program
TRADEMARK EXERCISES

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ESSENTRICS TRAINING SERIES INSTRUCTOR MANUAL
PRINCIPLES OF THE ESSENTRICS PROGRAM
“TRADEMARK EXERCISES”
“ESSENTRICS brings me back to when I didn't have to think of my body”

Jonathon Powers
Two time World Squash Champion
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CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 1

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SECTION 2: BREAKDOWN OF A TRADEMARK SEQUENCE

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SECTION 5: KEY ESSENTRICS TEACHING POINTS

Pointer 1 - Correct position of Neutral C and Neutral Elongation
Pointer 2 - Remind your students to contract their muscles while lengthening them
Pointer 3 - Corrections
Pointer 4 - Show the target muscles
Pointer 5 - Clean alignment: legs, knees & feet
Pointer 6 - Upper body atrophy & posture
Pointer 7 - Overloading & distribution of weight
Pointer 8 - 5 to 6 minute trademark sequences
Pointer 9 - Pain Relief
Pointer 10 - Don't stop to explain
Trademark, Exercises & Sequences

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 1

Trademark exercises are the backbone of the Essentrics program and are in large part what sets Essentrics apart from other fitness programs. These exercises and sequences are challenging, easy to follow and fun to do, and they give results. They are what help rebalance the full body muscular skeleton; they improve posture, relieve pain and fundamentally change the shape of the body.

This Level 2 training will help deepen your understanding of how and why these exercises are so effective and will give you the tools in order to teach these unique exercises and sequences. The “trademarks” are a large part of why Essentrics increases flexibility and strengthens the body so effectively. The fundamental principles of the Essentrics program that you learned about in the first manual are the foundation of these trademark exercises.
It would be impossible to be an Essentrics instructor without understanding and mastering the Trademark sequences. This Level 2 training will enhance your understanding of the science behind the movements and help you correctly teach these exciting exercises & sequences by giving you a greater depth of knowledge that you can pass on to your students.

Level 2 will cover the following: exercises most commonly used in Essentrics trademarks, basic positions and transition movements essential in learning the Essentrics language, and finally how to string together several trademark exercises to create a well balanced 6 minute sequence. Once you complete this level, you will better understand how every sequence includes exercises for the top-three and big-four as well as how they work progressively through the reflexes. You will also develop a better understanding of how and why the sequences balance the short and long muscles of each joint as they stretch and strengthen the muscles.

Take your time to study each position, exercise and transition making sure that you perfect your own execution of the movements. As you are currently in the apprentice period you will find this Level 2 training very helpful in deepening your understanding of the entire program.

*We are aware that the trademark exercises are the most unique and complex portion of Essentrics. We have included in this Level 2 training many teaching pointers that will guide you in teaching trademark sequences.*

**SECTION 1:**

**DESIGN OF TRADEMARK SEQUENCES**

The trademark exercises and sequences flow seamlessly from one movement to the next almost like dance choreography. Do not be deceived by the illusion that it is choreography and not science. Behind each exercise, transition and sequence there is a clear scientific rule that is being followed.

The trademark sequences & exercises are not haphazardly strung together to look pretty and feel pleasant; they are following a strict and clear set of rules. Once you learn these rules and become familiar with the trademark sequences you will understand how to design your own sequences.

You will notice that the rules of the top three and big four and agonist antagonist are integrated into every trademark sequence.
FOR EXAMPLE:

If we do the clock we usually follow it with the airplane (the clock is side flexion the airplane is forward flexion, quads, gluteus & hamstrings).

OR...

If we do push-the-piano, pull-the-donkey, ceiling reaches, open-chest-swan it is followed by washing windows (forward & back flexion into side to side flexion of the spine).
The movements are fluid but the rules are clear. Every technique, objective and rule that you have learned in the first manual is now to be applied to the trademark exercises.

- Equal work of the top three and big four
- Equal work of the short and long levers
- Working through the reflexes
- Preventing overloading
- Constant interplay between agonist/antagonist
- Full body workout
- Focusing on slenderizing and eccentric movement whenever possible
- Posture improvement
- Core strengthening
- Body awareness
- Training of clean alignment
SECTION 2:
BREAKDOWN OF A TRADEMARK SEQUENCE

As you have studied the Principals of the Essentrics Program manual, you will remember that there are basic rules behind the structure of the workout and how the exercises are executed. In routine #1 (PCW1) the breakdown of the first 30 minutes is standard for an Essentrics class. It begins with a warm-up followed by the first of two trademark sequences, which are separated by two other exercises such as plies, kicks or arms.

As Essentrics is a strengthening program we caution against overloading the muscles by either holding the positions too long or by using the same muscle group repetitively. The trademark sequences are often physically challenging, which means that the two 6-minute trademark sequence are never placed one after the other in the layout of a workout but are separated by exercises that challenge other muscles groups such as plies, kicks and arms. By dividing the two trademark sequences (in a one hour workout) an efficient balance of hard work which does not overload the muscles is achieved.

You will notice that most trademark sequences and exercises last between 5 and 6 minutes. These sequences are made up of top-three exercises focusing equally on forward, back and side flexion. For example a standard sequence would include; a side flexion sequences like single arm double arm, half and full body rotations followed by push-the-piano pull-the-donkey, open chest swan and spinal roll. They are most often repeated two to three times; the first time is used for the students to familiarise themselves with the choreography, the second and third time for students to be able to work to the end of their movements to achieve their maximum strengthening and flexibility benefits.

Trademark sequences always follow the rules regarding the myotatic reflexes or neurological system as explained in the Principals of the Essentrics Program manual. In repeating the exercises three times the muscles can work through the myotatic reflexes to gain deeper flexibility and strength.

Trademark sequences need lots of time in order to be effective and this is why they require 5 to 6 minutes to complete. Each sequence must integrate within the choreography the following rules; going through the reflexes, working equally short and long muscles, rebalancing all the muscles and repeating the sequences two to three times. There is a lot of territory to cover in every trademark sequence which requires a lot of actual time.
SECTION 3:
TEMPO OR SPEED

In addition to the length of time it takes to cover all the muscular territory, the accurate speed or tempo is vital in achieving the desired outcome. Rushing through the exercises changes the end results. Too fast a tempo prevents the muscles from reaching their maximum elongation, causing the muscles to contract and look bulky. If you find that you are finishing the trademark exercises in 3 to 4 minutes then you know that you are doing them too rapidly and therefore incorrectly. Many instructors have trouble finding the balance between working slowly enough so as to permit the muscles to go through the reflexes and not going too slowly so as to cause overloading.

It takes practice, awareness of your client’s strength and flexibility and sensitivity to be able achieve the correct tempo. Because of the difficulty in getting the tempo correct we recommend that you follow the exact speed as shown in the pre-choreographed routines. In following the routine you will know that you are correct and eventually the correct tempo will become second nature when you become a more experienced instructor.

After you have finished studying this Level 2 trademark training you are expected to submit a DVD test demonstrating four trademark sequences. The speed in which you do the trademark sequences is one of the main points we will be looking for.

The most common mistake apprentice teachers make is incorrect tempo or speed in which they do the exercises. In Essentrices we try to work with the neurological system, where an awareness of timing is essential to trigger the muscles into releasing tension, leading into a deep stretch. Incorrect timing triggers the opposite response by making muscles contract in protection mode against overloading and thus shortening them. New instructors commonly move too quickly from one exercise to the next or too slowly holding positions excessively long.

The teacher who moves too rapidly never fully finishes a stretch before moving onto the next one. This fast tempo forces the muscles to remain in a constant state of partial contraction making them develop in a bulky finish. This prevents participants from achieving the desired results of slenderizing their muscles or increasing their flexibility. The teacher who moves too slowly causes a different set of problems for her clients. When any position is held for a prolonged period of time the muscles will overload and contract, preventing the flexibility benefits as the muscles shorten.

Again as I recommended above, the best way to avoid these two common mistakes as a beginner Essentrices instructor is to follow the exact speed demonstrated on the training DVD’s.
SECTION 4:
ANATOMY & ESSENTRICS

A working knowledge of anatomy is essential at this point in your training as each exercise and movement cannot be properly understood, explained or executed without knowing which muscles you are using and in what direction they flow. You should have a working knowledge of the insertion and origin of each muscle, their size and their primary function. This manual will help you become familiar with the target anatomy of every exercise and help to increase your knowledge of muscles and their movements.

This is not an anatomy manual, if you need a refresher course I highly recommend a book which is used by medical students, “The Anatomy Coloring Book”, by Wynn Kapit and Lawrence M. Elson. This book is extremely detailed and easy to learn from, plus you get a chance to color so it’s fun.

When training fitness instructors I always suggest that they try to visualize the human body from the inside out, and understand how each movement is achieved by carrying out intelligent interplay between the muscles, tendons, bones and nervous system.

The deeper your understanding of anatomy, physiology and movement grows the better an Essentrics instructor you will become.

All movements start with a command from the central nervous system as it instructs the muscles to react. In the chapter of the Level 1 manual on the dating game I tried to explain the relationship between the central nervous system and all movement. In this manual of trademark exercises you will be expected to put this knowledge into practice while you work with the neurological system using PNF (contract, relax, release, stretch) in many of these basic sequences.