

*MoveSMART Movement:*

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**3 THINGS YOU NEED  
TO KNOW NOW  
FOR SUCCESSFUL  
ONLINE CUEING**

Are you a really tactile teacher who makes great connections with clients through gentle directive touch? Are you challenged in your online teaching because you can't touch your clients?

There are lots of ways to enhance the teaching and learning experience, even though you aren't together in person!

*But first, my "official bio":*

Alison has been teaching Pilates and movement for almost 20 years. A dedicated Pilates instructor with an eye for detail, she enhanced her skills and understanding of bio mechanics and functional alignment during her certification as a Restorative Exercise Specialist with Katy Bowman and the Nutritious Movement Institute.

Alison is fascinated by how bodies work and has taken part in two fascial dissections with Tom Myers of Anatomy Trains. Her experiences have added nuance and detail to her understanding of how truly it's all connected!

Alison has an approach to movement and health that includes exercise-specific movement, natural everyday movement, somatic body and brain exploration and a deep conviction that how our brains and bodies get together makes all the difference to how we feel. Combining functional, exploratory details and alignment with fluid, intuitive movement and an emphasis on acceptance and fun leads to sustainable change that helps you feel better for life!

Alison Crouch

**Owner of Boomerang Pilates and  
MoveSMART Movement**







## **1) You can help your clients be super connected, so they don't need your hands.**

Spend a few minutes at the beginning of the session doing a body scan with the client lying on the mat. Have them really sense the weight of their body on the ground.

*Offer cues like “wiggle your shoulder blades. Feel how they move between the floor and your ribs. Turn your head from side to side. Do it so you can hear your hair rustle on the floor, then do it again so your hair is silent. That gives you two different ways to turn your head!”*

*“Can you feel your hamstrings/the backs of your legs on the floor? Lots of us can't! What happens if you really let your legs melt deep into your hip joints?”*

These explorations allow your client to really connect to their sense of self and where they are in space. That way when you offer a verbal cue, both you and your client have a base reference.

When doing a roll up, for instance, you could say *“Remember when you moved your head on the floor and really felt the back of your skull? Imagine I have my hand right there, under your head, and I’m going to help support your head as you smoothly roll your head around until it floats over your shoulders.”*

When you’re helping your client find a standing alignment you can say *“Remember when you were lying down and you really felt the bottom of your bra strap on the mat? Now imagine I have my hand behind you and you’re going to just gently snuggle your ribs back until that exact bra strap spot reaches my hand.”*

You can use these strategies live in the studio too, when you have a client who doesn't like tactile cueing. These are important skills no matter how or where you're teaching!



## **2) Cues that your clients respond to AND that feel great to you translate beautifully online.**

Verbal cues include four categories: anatomical structure and function, directional, sensory perception and imagery cueing strategies. You can use them separately or together to enhance your descriptions and instructions in the ways that best resonate with any given client.

In addition we have internal focus (how your body moves relative to itself) and external focus (how your body moves relative to an outside reference).

Here are some examples for spinal articulation from sitting to supine (the Roll Down in Pilates). Which do your client prefer? Which feel most natural to you?

### *A. Imagery, internal focus*

Visualize each vertebra of your spine like a string of beads hanging down long and beautiful, connected to the basin of your pelvis. Initiate the movement by rolling your pelvis away from your leg bones. Follow that with each bead of your spine easing away from your pelvis, one at a time (knowing that of course it doesn't really move that way!).

### *B. Imagery, external focus*

Imagine a series of stickers in your favourite colour, each with a number on it from 1-10. 1 is right at the bottom of your spine on your tailbone. 10 is at the back of your skull, and the rest are evenly spaced along the rest of your spine. Initiate your roll down by sliding JUST the number 1 sticker onto the floor. Now keep it heavy and add JUST the number 2 sticker. Keep going, adding only one sticker at a time. Find the sticky spots that don't want to move as smoothly and give them some extra time and attention.

### *C. Anatomical structure, external focus, directional*

Start sitting up and feel your sit bones weighted on the floor. Really pay attention to the strong support of the ground under you. Picture your spine made up of your lumbar, thoracic and cervical vertebrae. See the structure of your pelvis, including your sacrum. Tilt your pelvis towards the wall behind you. Slowly roll down, melding your pelvis and each part of your spine into the ground. Really feel your shirt between your back and the floor. Make sure you totally connect to the ground under one spot before you move up to the next. Don't forget to let your lower back float up to neutral after you've rolled past it!



Combine different strategies, explore and experiment. Different clients will resonate with one thing and not another. Or they'll do better with something one day, and not the following week. The goal is not to be perfect, but to encourage your client to understand the movements, develop their competence and feel a sense of agency and independence.

And remember, sometimes the best cue is just to be quiet and honour the journey!

Let your clients move, make mistakes, learn at their own pace and come to a deeper appreciation of the movements through their own experimentation. As much as you would be silent and allow for some un-corrected repetitions in person, it's ok to be quiet online, too.





Jennifer's iPhone



Alison Crouch

### 3) The camera is your friend

I have a client who has a hard time finding herself in space. Left and right are a challenge, and I normally do lots of tactile cueing for her. Now, in our virtual sessions, I put my hand up flat towards the camera and say “roll your hips towards my hand”. Make yourself the reference point and ask the client to come towards you as though you were together in person. The combination of your voice coming through their device with the visual of your hand serves to support your client’s sense of direction.

Get comfortable with asking your client to move their device around so you can get the best angle for observation. It’s ok to acknowledge that this isn't exactly the same as being in person, and using the technology for optimal results serves you and them. It may feel clunky to begin with, but the more comfortable you are with moving your own camera, and the more precise you can be with the client, the more it becomes part of the flow of the session or class.



For instance, going back to our Roll Down example, it's great to see the client in profile to observe the degree of articulation. And, although of course it means a change in head position, the client can watch themselves and see when and where their spine gets more or less precise and mobile. That can be a really helpful tool for self-awareness!

But maybe you also want them to be face-on to the camera if they tend to lean their head back too soon. Then you could position them forward and cue "Keep your eyes forward so you can see yourself all the way through the roll down, until you get to the very last bit when your head floats to the floor."

Or perhaps they are stressing about the exercise and you can see a lot of tension in their face. I have a client who does that. He calls it his thinking face, but his concentration also puts a lot of strain on his neck and shoulders. Rather than repeatedly cue "relax your face", I sometimes have him face the camera and his only task is to watch his own face and keep it soft as he goes through a particular movement.

The camera is also helpful for taking a screenshot to show the client exactly what's happening with their body in a particular moment of an exercise and screen sharing it. You can take two screenshots to celebrate a before and after comparison of their success. And of course, you can record the session for future use.

All of those are fantastic supports for your successful cueing strategies!

There are so many ways to enhance your virtual teaching, but mostly it's about being confident, comfortable and authentically yourself! Practice, try different things, don't copy other teachers if what they're doing doesn't really resonate with you, but be inspired by those who you think are nailing it.

*You've got this!*

*Want more help?*

I offer 1:1 and small group coaching and mentoring for teachers and body workers.

**THRIVE**, my online, small group coaching program is coming up in the fall, and we can do a 1:1 session any time you're ready to take your teaching to the next level!

Reach out! [\*\*alison@movesmartmovement.com\*\*](mailto:alison@movesmartmovement.com)

## THRIVE: An Online Small Group Coaching Program for Movement Teachers



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