Balance and Flexibility

# Flexibility is a form of physical activity that happens by stretching and by moving a joint through its range of motion. Balance is the ability for the body to remain stable when doing a movement.

## Benefits of Balance and Flexibility Exercise

### Basic stretching tips

* Warm up with light exercise before stretching.
* Stretch before and after you exercise or three times per week. Do balance exercises 1-2 times a week.
* Do not hold your breath while stretching or balancing.
* Do not bounce while stretching or balancing.

### Why should you stretch/improve balance

* Stretching and balancing improves athletic ability.
* Stretching and balancing decreases the risk of injury.
* Stretching and balancing increases your range of motion.

## Types of stretching

### Dynamic Stretching

Dynamic stretching is controlled leg and arm movements that take you gently to the limits of your range of motion. In dynamic stretches, there are no bounces or quick movements. An example of a dynamic stretch would be slow leg swings, arm swings, or torso twists.

Dynamic stretching is best for warming up BEFORE exercising.

Types of dynamic stretching and their what they are can be found below:

1. Tip-toe walking – A lower body stretch. Walk on your toes for 45 seconds.
2. Leg swings – A lower body stretch. With one arm reached to the side and the other against the wall, swing your outside leg in front and then behind you. Repeat 10 times.
3. Hurdler’s Knee Raise – A lower body stretch. While moving forward, raise your leg as if stepping over an object just below waist height, then return to normal walking. Repeat 10 times.
4. Inch worm – A lower body stretch. Stand up, legs together. Bend over, stretch hands in front and place them on the ground. Walk your feet toward your hands, then back. Repeat 10 times.
5. Heel-ups – A lower body stretch. Quickly kick heels toward buttocks while moving forward.
6. Side lunges – A lower body stretch. Spread legs wide and lean side to side. Keep weight on the heel of the foot as you lean. Repeat 10 times.
7. Push Up with Rotation – An upper body stretch. Start in push-up position. Push up until you’re arms and back are straight. Rotate your left hand into the air and lift your left foot off the ground and place it on the right foot. Repeat on the other side.
8. Scorpion – An upper body stretch. Lie on your stomach with your arms reached out and toes pointed. Kick your left foot toward your right arm and vice versa. Repeat 10 times.
9. Airplanes – An upper body stretch. Stretch your arms out straight to the sides and spin them in circles. Alternate directions. Do it for 45 seconds.
10. Swimmers Stretch – An upper body stretch. Swing your arms out wide and then bring them in, giving yourself a big hug. Repeat 10 times.

### Static Stretching

Static stretching is pushing the joints to the point that it is the hardest to stretch and then holding that position. Another type of static stretching, known as passive stretching. It is when a person relaxes while a different force, either a person or a thing brings the joint through its range of motion.

This form of stretching is best for AFTER exercising and for increasing range of motion.

Type of static stretching and what they are can be found below:

1. Neck stretch – An upper body stretch, gently tilt your head to one side as if your ear was listening to your shoulder. Repeat on the other side.
2. Chest stretch – An upper body stretch, while standing or sitting, place hands behind your back and interlock fingers. Straighten arms, sit up tall, and push forward. Hold for 5-10 seconds.
3. Triceps Stretch – An upper body stretch, bend your arm behind head as if scratching your back. Then, place the other hand on your elbow and pull down. Hold, and repeat on the other arm.
4. Seated twist – An upper body stretch, while seated, place your left hand on your right knee. Put your right hand behind you. Twist towards your right hand. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat on the other side.
5. Shoulder stretch – An upper body stretch. While standing or sitting, hold one arm out in front of you. Grab your shoulder with the other arm and pull it across your body.
6. Abdominal stretch – A core stretch. Lay face down on the ground. Lift your upper body upward while your lower body stays touching the floor.
7. Hip flexors stretch – A core stretch. Keep your back straight tuck your bottom under, lunge forward on your front leg.
8. Seated abs stretch – A core stretch. While seated, reach your arms over your head and feet out in front of you. Reach your arms as high as you can in the air while still sitting.
9. Lumbar Stretch – Start in a standing position. Reach forward with your arms, push your chest toward the floor, arch your back down with your backside behind your knees.
10. Hamstring Stretch – A lower body stretch. Sit on the floor. Start with your knee slightly bent, then push your knee straight as far as you can. Push your chest toward your foot and try to touch your toes.
11. Hip Stretch – A lower body stretch. Sit on the floor. Place the bottoms of your feet together. Next, push down with your elbows on your knees gently. Keep your back straight.
12. Quadriceps Stretch – A lower body stretch. Stand on one leg, balance, pull your foot toward buttocks.
13. Calf Stretch – A lower body stretch. Stand facing a wall. Keep your knee straight and heel down, with your feet facing forward. Lean toward the wall in front of you.
14. Glute stretch – A lower body stretch. While lying on the ground, place your left ankle on your right knee. With both hands, pull your right knee toward your face. Stretch will be in left glute muscle. Do the stretch on both sides.

## Balance Exercises:

Tree Pose – While standing, press the bottom of your right foot to the inside of your left thigh, just above the knee cap. While holding this, bring your arms to either a prayer-like position or reach them up over your head. Hold for 10-20 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

Half Moon Pose – While standing, bring your right leg off the ground keeping it straight and behind you. Bring your left arm to the ground or to a stool for those not as flexible. Reach your right arm up above you. Hold for 10-20 seconds. Do it again on the other side.

## Make your own goals!

In the next week I will [add your own goal].

In the next month I will [add your own goal].

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