WEIGHT TRAINING STRETCHES

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Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle or joint problem, please consult your personal health care professional before starting a stretching or exercise program.

Stretching should be done before and after activity or whenever you feel like it.

How to Stretch:

Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight, easy stretch. Hold this feeling for 5-20 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, just ease off slightly into a more comfortable stretch. The easy stretch reduces tension and readies the tissues for the developmental stretch.

After holding the easy stretch move a fraction of an inch farther into the stretch until you feel mild tension again. This is the developmental stretch which should be held for 5-20 seconds. This feeling of stretch tension should also slightly diminish or stay the same. If the tension increases or becomes painful, you are over-stretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. The developmental stretch reduces tension and will safely increase flexibility.

Hold only stretch tensions that feel good to you. The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep and rhythmical. Don't worry about how far you can stretch. Stretch relaxed and limberness will become just one of the many by-products of regular stretching.

Do a light warm-up of walking or jogging for several minutes prior to stretching.

The dotted areas are those areas of the body where you will most likely feel the stretch.

1 Legs & Hips:

To stretch the upper hamstrings and hip, hold on to the outside of your ankle with one hand, with your other hand and forearm around your bent knee. Gently pull the leg ***as one unit*** toward your chest until you feel an easy stretch in the back of the upper leg. You may want to do this stretch while you rest your back against something for support. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Make sure the leg is pulled as one unit so that stress is not felt in the knee.

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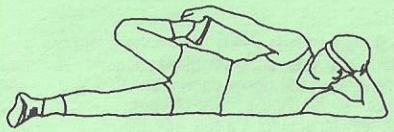

Lie on your left side and rest the side of your head in the palm of your left hand. Hold the top of your right foot with your right hand between the toes and ankle joint.

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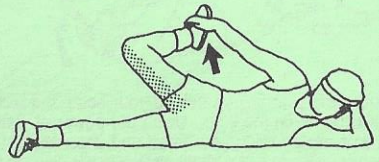
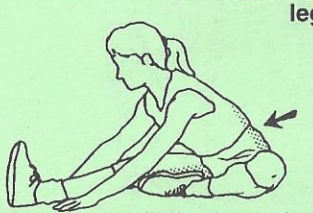


Now move the front of your right hip forward by contracting the right butt (gluteus) muscles as you push your right foot into your right hand. This should stretch the front of your thigh. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Keep your body in a straight line.

4

Repeat stretches #1-4 for other leg.



Sitting, straighten your right leg, the sole of your left foot resting next to the inside of your straightened leg. Lean slightly forward from the hips and stretch the hamstrings of your right leg. Find an easy stretch and relax. **If you can't touch your toes comfortably, use a towel to help you stretch.** Hold for 20 seconds. Do not lock your knee. Your right quadriceps should be soft and relaxed during the stretch. Keep your right foot upright with the ankle and toes relaxed. Breathe relaxed.

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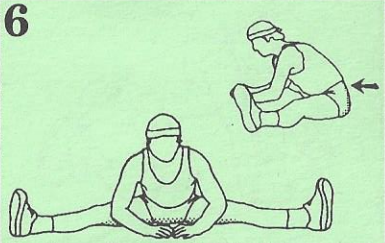

Sit with your feet a comfortable distance apart. To stretch the inside of your upper legs and hips, slowly lean forward FROM THE HIPS. Be sure to keep your quadriceps relaxed and feet upright. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Keep your hands out in front of you for balance and stability or hold on to something in front of you for greater control. Concentrate on keeping the lower back flat as you do this stretch. Do not strain.

7

To stretch your left hamstrings and the right side of your back, slowly bend forward from the hips toward the foot of your left leg. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat to other side.

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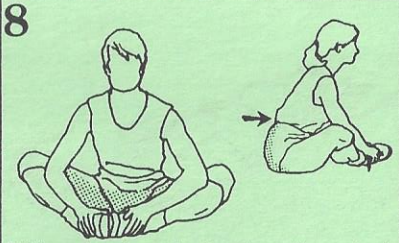

Put the soles of your feet together with your heels a comfortable distance from your groin. With your hands around your feet slowly contract your abdominals to assist you in flexing forward until you feel an easy stretch in the groin. Make your movement forward by bending FROM THE HIPS and not from the shoulders. If possible, keep your elbows on the outside of your lower legs for greater stability during the stretch. Hold a comfortable stretch for 20-30 seconds.

9

With your right leg straight, put your left foot flat on the ground on the other side of your right knee. Reach over your left leg with your right arm so that your elbow is on the outside of your left leg. With your left hand resting on the ground behind you, slowly turn your head to look over your left shoulder, and at the same time, turn your upper body (but not your hips) toward left hand and arm. Be sure to bend your right elbow and to gently push it against your bent leg. This will help create and stabilize the stretch. Hold for 5-15 seconds for each side. Stretches the outside of your upper leg and lower back.

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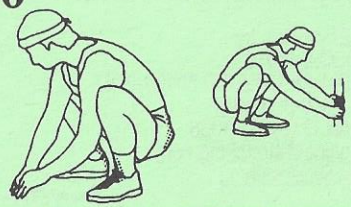
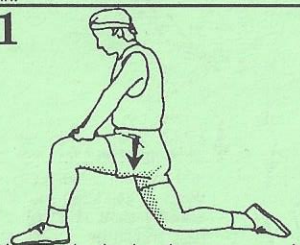


With your feet shoulder width apart and pointed out to about a 15° angle, heels on the ground, bend your knees and squat down. If you have trouble staying in this position hold onto something for support. It is a great stretch for your ankles, Achilles tendon area, groin, lower back and hips. Hold stretch for 20-30 seconds. **Be careful if you have had any knee problems. If pain is present discontinue this stretch.**

11



As shown in the drawing above, move one leg forward until the knee of the forward leg is directly over the ankle. Your other knee should be resting on the floor. Now, without changing the position of the knee on the floor or the forward foot, lower the front of your hip downward to create an easy stretch. This stretch should be felt in front of the hip and possibly in your hamstrings and groin. This will help relieve tension in the lower back. Hold the stretch for 20-30 seconds. Repeat for other leg.

12

To stretch your calf, stand a little ways from a solid support and lean on it with your forearms, your head resting on your hands. Bend one leg and place your foot on the ground in front of you leaving the other leg straight, behind you. *Slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the calf of your straight leg.* Be sure to keep the heel of the foot of the straight leg on the ground and your toes pointed straight ahead. Hold an easy stretch for 20 seconds. Do not bounce. Stretch both legs.

1 Neck & Back:

Standing with knees slightly bent, place your palms on lower back just above your hips, fingers pointing downward. Gently push your palms forward to create an extension in the lower back. Hold comfortable pressure for 10-12 seconds. Repeat twice. Use this stretch after sitting for an extended period of time.

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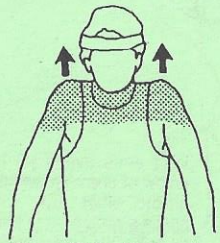

Shoulder Shrug: Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 2-3 times. Good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder and neck area.

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3

Interlace your fingers behind your head and rest your arms on the floor. Using the power of your arms, slowly bring your head and shoulders forward until you feel a slight stretch in the neck and upper back area. Think of elbows going toward mid thighs. Hold an easy stretch for 5 seconds. Repeat three times. Do not overstretch.

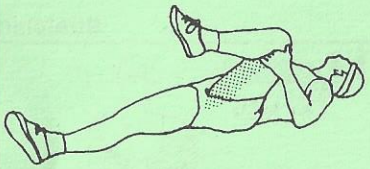
4

Repeat stretch 3

Shoulder Blade Pinch: From the bent-knee position pull your shoulder blades together to create tension in the upper back area. (As you do this your chest should move upward.) Hold this controlled tension for 4-5 seconds, then relax and gently pull your head forward as shown in stretch #3. This will help release tension and allow the neck to be stretched effectively.

5

6

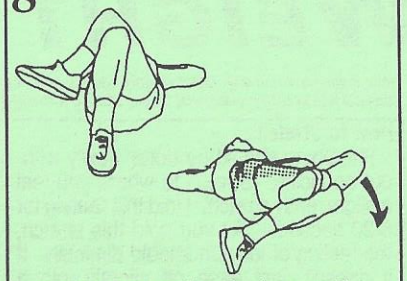


Next, straighten both legs and relax, then pull your right leg toward your chest. For this stretch keep the back of your head down, if possible, but don't strain. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Repeat, pulling your left leg toward your chest. Stretches hip and upper hamstrings. Breathe while stretching.

7

While lying on your back, bend your right knee and put the outside of your right lower leg just above your opposite knee. With your hands just below your left knee, gently pull your leg toward your chest until a stretch is felt in your right buttocks area (piriformis). Hold for 15-20 seconds. Lift the back of your head off the mat and look straight ahead as you stretch. Breathe slowly and deeply. Repeat for other side.

8

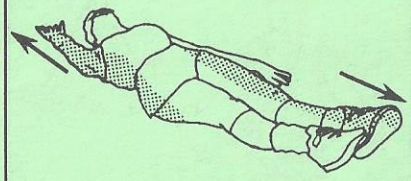


From a bent knee position, interlace your fingers behind your head and lift the left leg over the right leg. From here, use your left leg to pull your right leg toward the floor until you feel a good stretch. Stretch and relax. Keep the upper back, shoulders, and elbows flat on the floor. The idea is not to touch the floor with your right knee, but to stretch within your limits. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat stretch for other side.

9

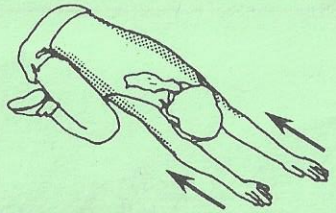
With one leg straight, bend your other leg and with opposite hand, pull that bent leg up and over your other leg as shown above. Turn your head to look toward the hand of the arm that is straight (head should be resting on the floor). Make sure the back of your shoulders are kept flat on the ground. Now, using your hand on your thigh (resting just above the knee), pull your bent leg down toward the floor until you get the right stretch feeling in your lower back and side of hip. Keep feet and ankles relaxed. Hold a comfortable stretch for 15-20 seconds, each side. Do not hold your breath.

10



Stretch diagonally by pointing the toes of your *left* foot as you extend your *right* arm. Stretch as far as is comfortable. Hold 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat, stretching the right leg and the left arm. Do not hold your breath.

1 Arms & Shoulders:



With legs bent under you, reach forward with both arms and grab the end of a mat, carpet or anything you can hold onto. If you can't grab onto something just pull back with your arms straight while pressing down slightly with your hands. (Do likewise pulling on end of mat.) Hold stretch for 20 seconds. Don't strain. You should feel the stretch in your shoulders, arms, sides, upper back, or even in your lower back. Breathe easily.

2

From the position illustrated above, with your palms flat and fingers pointed toward you, slowly lean backwards to stretch the forearms and wrists. Be sure to keep your palms flat. Hold a comfortable stretch for 15-20 seconds. **Do not overstretch.** Stretch for a good feeling. Enjoy stretching.

3

Interlace your fingers above your head. With your palms facing upward, push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in arms, shoulders and upper back. Hold stretch for 15 seconds. Do not hold your breath. This stretch is good to do anywhere, anytime.

4

With arms overhead, hold the elbow of one arm with the hand of the other arm. Keeping knees slightly bent (1 inch), gently pull your elbow behind your head as you bend from your hips to the side. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Do both sides. **Keeping your knees slightly bent will give you better balance.**

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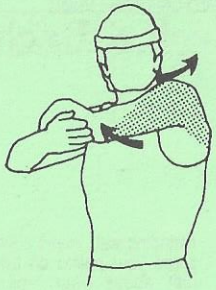

Hold your left arm just above the elbow with your right hand. Gently pull your left elbow toward your opposite shoulder as you look over your left shoulder. Hold the stretch for 15-20 seconds. Stretch both sides.

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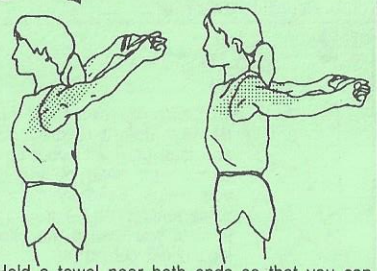

Hold a towel near both ends so that you can move it with straight arms up, over your head and down behind your back. Do not strain or force it. Your hands should be far enough apart to allow for relatively free movement up, over and down. To isolate and add further stretch to the muscles of a particular area, hold the stretch at any place during this movement for 10-20 seconds.

7

Place both hands shoulder width apart on a fence or ledge and let your upper body drop down as you keep your **knees slightly bent** (1 inch). Your hips should be directly above your feet. *To change the area of the stretch, bend your knees just a bit more and/or place your hands at different heights.* Find a stretch that you can hold for at least 20 seconds. **(Remember to always bend your knees when coming out of this stretch.)**

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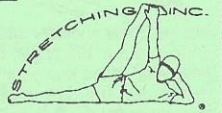

Bob and Jean Anderson, creators of this stretching chart are also the authors of the book, STRETCHING. Now a revised ©2010 edition; available spiral bound.

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