

Stretching Guide ®



Special Olympics
Unified Champion
Schools®

Importance of Stretching



Flexibility is the ability to move easily in all directions.

Being flexible makes it easier to engage in sport skills and helps prevent injuries to your muscles and joints.

Stretching helps achieve a greater range of motion, reduces muscle tension, and improves blood flow, leading to better athletic outcomes and a more positive experience.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- 15-20 repetitions for dynamic exercises
- Hold static stretches for 30 seconds or more
- Many of these stretches can be done in place or across the playing area.
- Select a few exercises that **focus on different muscles**.
- Provide modifications for teammates if exercises are too easy or too difficult
 - Example: high knees
 - Easy modification go slower, march in place
 - Hard modification increase your speed

Dynamic Stretch Warm-up Guide



A warm-up should be the first physical activity in every training session or competition. It helps athletes prepare their body and mind for their sport.

When athletes prepare both their body and mind, they are less likely to suffer an injury and will perform better at each practice, training, or competition.

Dynamic stretches consist of active, controlled movements that take body parts through a full range of motion. Dynamic stretches help keep the body temperature and heartrate elevated.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL BENEFITS

- Increase heartate
- Increase breathing rate
- Increase body and msucle temperature
- Greater blood flow to the active muscles
- Shift focus from life to sport
- Connects the mind and the body



- Walk or jog while raising your bent knee up to the level of your hip or higher.
- Quickly alternate legs. Keep arms bent at the elbows and swinging back to front.
- Start slowly with a walk/march and then speed up to a jog or run.
- This exercise can be done in place or while moving around an activity space.





- Walk or jog while reaching one knee towards your glutes, keeping your knee pointing straight down.
- Quickly alternate legs, repeating the movement with the other leg.
- Increase speed to a jogging motion, alternating legs and pumping arms for added intensity.



- Start in a standing position and hold onto something stable (e.g., wall, chair, fence) lightly with both hands.
- Swing/raise one foot forward and backward, like a pendulum.
- Repeat the exercise with the other leg.





- Stand with your right heel out in front, toes pointed up, and legs straight.
- Bend forward and reach down toward your right foot and scoop with your hands.
- Step forward and return to a standing position. Repeat with your left heel in front.





- Start in a standing position.
- Shift your weight back onto your heels.
- Lift your toes off the ground.
- Stay on your heels and walk forward for 15-20 steps.





- Start in a standing position.
- Shift your weight onto the balls of your feet.
- Raise your heels off the ground to stand on your tiptoes.
- Stay on your toes and walk forward for 15-20 steps.





- Start in a standing position with your arms apart and stretch your arms out to the sides making a "T" shape.
- Reach out one hand across your body and tap the outside of the opposite foot. Keep your arms and legs as straight as possible.
- Return to the upright starting position with arms out to sides.
- Reach your other hand across and tap the outside of the opposite foot.





- Stand tall with your arms straight down. Slowly make large circles with your arms in the forward direction.
- Repeat exercises in the backward direction.
- Perform this exercise in place or while walking.





- Start in a standing position with your feet apart and stretch your arms out to the sides making a "T" shape.
- Cross your arms in the front of the body and reach as far back as possible to touch your shoulders or back.
- Uncross your arms and return to your starting position.





- Sit or stand upright with your arm extended in front of you.
- Slowly rotate your wrist in a circle, moving through the full range of motion.
- Perform the rotation both in clockwise and counter-clockwise directions.
- Complete with ankles as well.





Static Stretch Cool-Down Guide



When your training, practice, or sport session is complete, you should always cool-down. It is just as important to have a cool down as it is to have a good warm-up.

A good **cool-down allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest.** Stretching is a great way to help your muscles recover and prevent injuries! Each sport places stress on different muscles and joints, so it is important to make your stretches sport-specific.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL BENEFITS

- Reduced muscle soreness and tension
- Promotes better posture and blood flow
- Mentally reduces stress, improves mood, and enhances focus



- Stand facing a wall. Put your hands against the wall at shoulder height.
- Put one foot in front of the other, with the toes of one foot up against the wall and your heel on the ground.
- Bend your elbows and lean in towards the wall.
- Keep your knee straight and hips forward. Make sure your heel stays on the ground.
- Switch your feet and repeat the stretch.



Standing Chest Stretch



- Stand and put your hands together behind your back.
- Raise your hands up as high as possible while keeping your elbows straight. Push your chest forward.
- Keep your back straight and chin up.



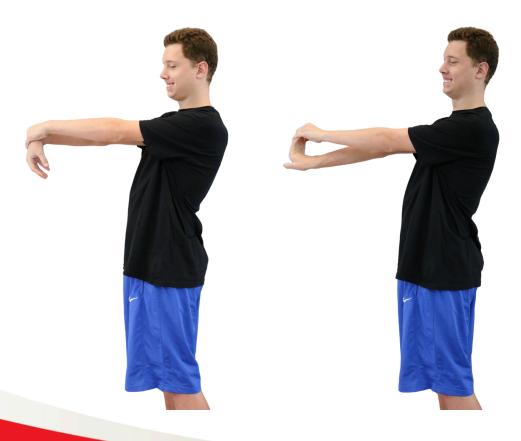


- Stand or sit tall with your left arm by your ear. Bend your elbow so that your hand touches your back
- Reach over your head with your right arm. Grab your left elbow with your right hand. Pull your left arm even closer to your ear. You should feel a stretch in your upper left arm.
- Repeat the stretch with your right arm by your ear and your left arm grabbing your right elbow.





- Sit or stand with your head up and looking forward
- **Flexion** turn your palm face up toward the ceiling. Use the other hand to pull your fingers back toward the ground.
- **Extension** turn your palm towards the ground. Use the other hand to pull your hand down toward the ground.
- Switch arms and repat both sides.





- Stand tall with your feet a little wider than your hips.
- Bring your left arm up so that it is close to your ear.
- Bend sideways at your waist toward your right side. Keep your arm next to your ear the whole time. You should feel a stretch in the left side of your torso.
- Repeat with your right arm up and your left side bent.





- Stand up tall and shift your weight to your right leg.
- Lift your left foot and hold it with your left hand. You may put your right hand on a stable surface to help you balance.
- Pull your left foot toward your body until you feel a stretch in the front of your left leg.
- Switch legs and repeat the stretch on your right leg.





- Kneel on the ground.
- Take one big step forward. Bend your font leg.
- Push your hips forward and put your hands on your hips. You should feel a stretch in your back leg's hip area.
- Repeat the stretch with the other leg in front.





- Sit on the ground with the bottoms of your feet touching each other. Let your knees fall toward the floor.
- Your feet should be close to your body.
- Sit tall and lean forward over your feet.
- You should feel a stretch in your groin.





- Kneel on the ground.
- Bend at your hips. Put your arms next to your head with your hands on the ground in front of you.
- Sit your bottom down over your heels. You should feel a stretch in your shoulders and lower back.



- Sit tall on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you.
- Cross your right leg over your left leg. Put your right foot on the floor close to your left knee.
- Turn your upper body towards your right side. Use your right arm to help you sit tall. Use your left arm against your right leg to help you twist. You should feel a stretch in your hip and the side of your back.
- Switch sides and repeat the stretch.



- Lay on the ground with your right knee in the air.
- Put your left ankle on top of your right thigh.
- Grab underneath your right thigh. Pull your thigh towards your chest. You should feel a stretch in your left hip.
- Switch legs and repeat the stretch.





- Lay on the ground with your right knee in the air.
- Put your left ankle on top of your right thigh.
- Grab underneath your right thigh. Pull your thigh towards your chest. You should feel a stretch in your left hip.
- Switch legs and repeat the stretch.





Goals:

Special Olympics Iowa 551 SE Dovetail Rd PO Box 620 Grimes, IA 50111 (515) 986-5520

www.soiowa.org

