

Why Do We Need to Stretch before or after Physical Activity?

- Stretching helps prepare your body for exercise.
- Before you stretch, it's important to warm up first. Warming up increases your heart rate, gets more blood and oxygen flowing to your muscles and helps raise the temperature of your body so it is ready for exercise.
- Stretching properly can reduce injuries and give you better flexibility, range of movement, posture and coordination.
- If your muscles are not warmed up properly, it can lead to injury. Always warm up first.
- When you stretch, make sure you're doing it properly. Stretching should never hurt, so make sure you stop if you start to feel any pain.
- Try to hold your stretches for six to ten seconds.
- Try not to bounce when you stretch, as this can damage your muscles.
- Keep breathing during your stretches. Proper breathing will make sure that your muscles get the oxygen they need during stretching.

Why Do We Need to Stretch before or after Physical Activity?

- Sometimes specific stretches can be done to target certain groups of muscles that you might be using a lot in the main activity or for a particular sport, such as your leg muscles when doing jumping activities.
- When you've finished exercising, it's important to cool down.
- Stretching is an important part of the cooling down process.
- Stretching after a workout helps to avoid tired, stiff, and sore muscles by relaxing them before returning to a normal pace.

Calf Stretch

- Stand tall with one leg in front of the other, slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Bend your front leg so your knee is almost at a 90° angle – your knee should be in line with your foot.
- Your back leg stays straight, with your foot flat on the floor.
- Keep your hips facing forwards.
- You should feel the stretch in the calf of your back leg.
- Push into your bent leg and you should feel the stretch further.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap legs and repeat.



You should feel the stretch in the calf of your back leg.

Quadriceps Stretch

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Bend one of your legs at the knee and grasp the ankle with your hand, pulling your foot towards your bottom.
- Make sure your bent knee faces the floor. Don't let your knee flare out to the side.
- Your other arm can be extended out to the side for balance.
- You should feel the stretch in the front of your thigh (quadricep).
- Tilt your pelvis forwards to feel the stretch more.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap legs and repeat.

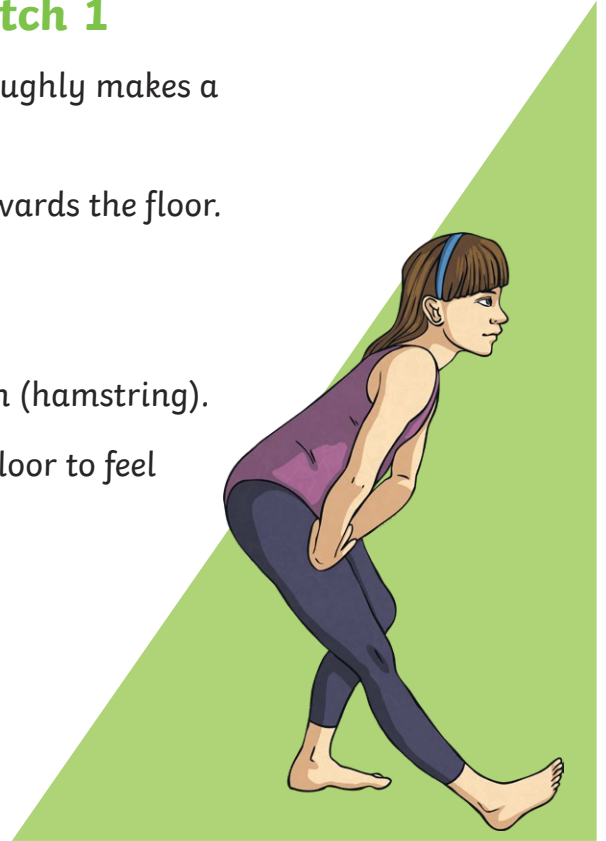


You should feel the stretch in the front of your thigh (quadricep).

Hamstring Stretch 1

- Step forward with one leg and straighten it so it roughly makes a 45° angle with the floor.
- Bend your other leg so that your bottom lowers towards the floor. You can lean on the front leg for balance.
- Keep the toes of both feet on the floor.
- You should feel the stretch in the back of your thigh (hamstring).
- Slowly, lift the toes of the straightened leg off the floor to feel the stretch further up your hamstring.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap legs and repeat.

You should feel the stretch in the back of your thigh (hamstring).



Hamstring Stretch 2

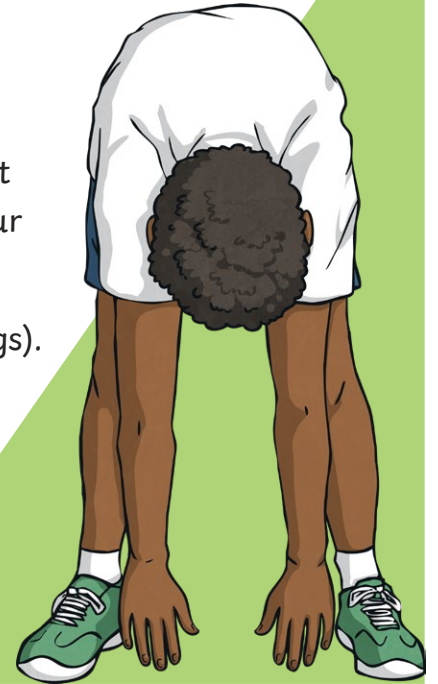
- Sit on the ground with both legs straight out in front of you.
- Bend one of your legs and place the sole of the foot alongside the knee of the straight leg.
- Allow the bent leg to lie relaxed on the ground, keeping the other leg straight.
- Bend forward, keeping your back straight, and try to touch the toes of your straight leg.
- You should feel the stretch in the hamstring of your straight leg.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap legs and repeat.

You should feel the stretch in the hamstring of your straight leg.



Hamstring Stretch 3

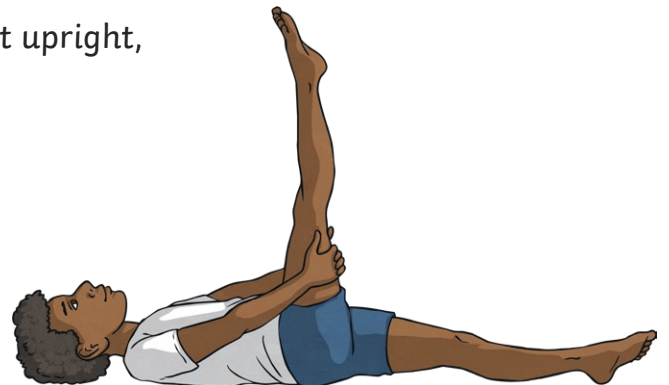
- Begin by standing with your feet about hip-width apart.
- Bending from your hips, lean forwards dropping your arms to the floor. Do not bend from your back.
- Keep your legs straight and see how far your hands can reach.
- If you can touch your toes quite easily, slowly shuffle your feet closer together. If you can't touch your toes, slowly shuffle your feet further apart until you can.
- You should feel the stretch in the back of your thighs (hamstrings).
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Relax for ten seconds and then repeat.



You should feel the stretch in the back of your thighs (hamstrings).

Hamstring Stretch 4

- Lie flat on the floor with both legs straight in front of you.
- Bring one leg up so it is as straight as you can make it in the air.
- The angle between your legs should be 90°.
- Cup your hands behind your lifted leg to keep it upright, keeping your upper body on the floor.
- You will feel this stretch at the back of the leg.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap legs and repeat.



You will feel this stretch down the back of the raised leg.

Groin and Inner Thigh Stretch (The Sumo)

- Start with your feet slightly more than shoulder-width apart and your toes angled out.
- Bend forward at the waist coming into a squatting position so your thighs are parallel with the floor.
- Place your elbows between your knees.
- Try to keep your back straight.
- You should feel the stretch in your groin and inner thighs.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Relax for ten seconds and then repeat.

You should feel the stretch in your groin and inner thighs.



Hip and Thigh Stretch

- Stand tall and take a large step forwards with one foot.
- Bend your front leg so that the thigh is parallel to the ground and the knee is at a 90° angle.
- Gradually lower your hips, keeping your back straight, until the knee of your back leg is touching the floor.
- Push your hips forwards.
- You should feel the stretch in your thighs and hips.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap legs and repeat.

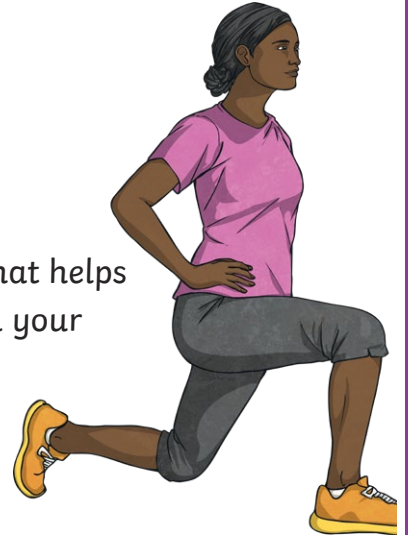
You should feel the stretch in your thighs and hips.



The Lunge

- Take a big lunge forward with one leg. Keep your back straight.
- Lower your body until your front knee is at 90° and your thigh is parallel to the ground. Your front knee should be positioned directly over your ankle.
- Your back knee should also be at about 90° with your lower leg parallel to the ground and your heel off the ground.
- You should feel the stretch in your thighs and hips.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Step forwards onto the opposite leg and repeat.
- Throughout the lunge exercise, your arms can be in any position that helps you maintain your balance. You might prefer to put your hands on your hips or to extend your arms out to the side.

You should feel the stretch in your thighs and hips.



The Tricep Stretch

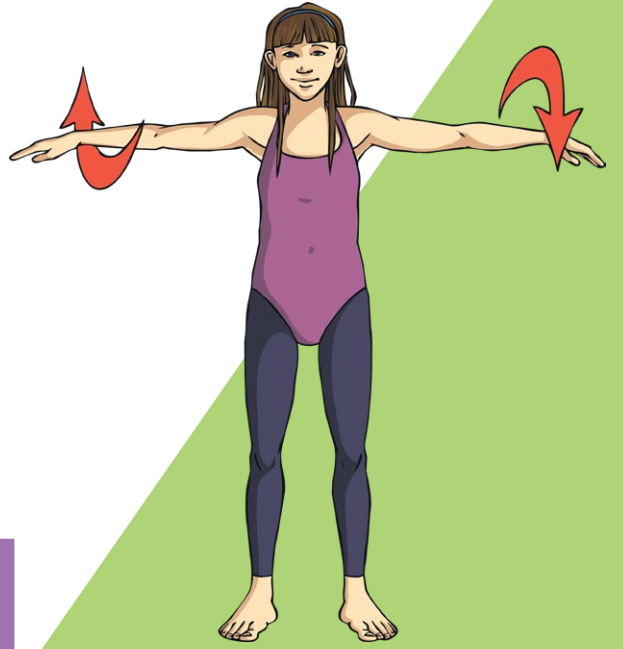
- Raise one arm behind your head with your palm facing your body.
- Bend the elbow so your fingers reach down towards the middle of your upper back.
- Take hold of the bent elbow with your other hand and gently pull it back until you feel the stretch in your tricep.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap arms and repeat.

You should feel the stretch in your tricep.



Arm Rotations

- Stand straight with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Extend both arms out to the side to shoulder height, keeping them straight.
- Rotate your arms in small circles from the back to the front ten times and then from the front to the back ten times.



This is good for the arms and shoulders before or after exercise.

Shoulder Stretch 1

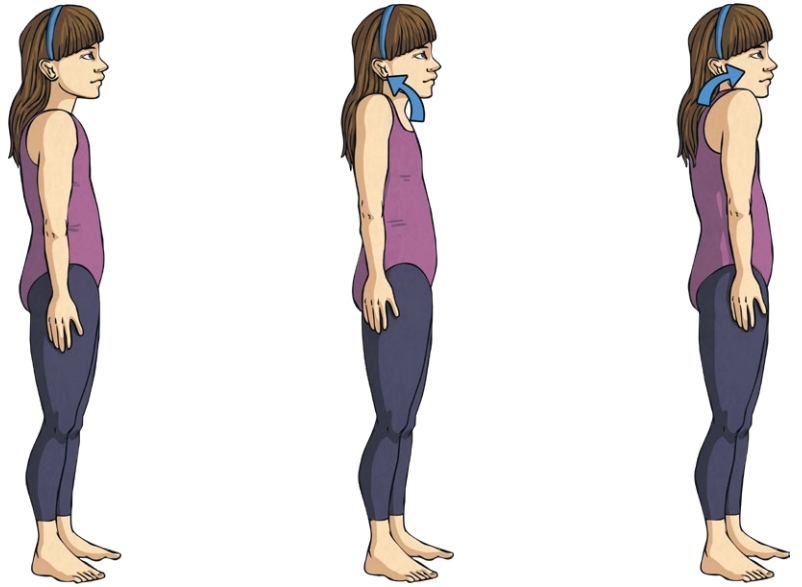
- Reach forwards with one arm straight out in front of you.
- Put the wrist of the other arm on the back of the outstretched arm, just above the elbow.
- Gently press the outstretched arm towards your body, while keeping it straight.
- You should feel the stretch in your shoulder.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap arms and repeat.



You should feel the stretch in your shoulder and tricep.

Shoulder Stretch 2

- Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Place your arms either side of your body and relax your shoulders.
- Keeping your arms where they are, shrug your shoulders up towards your ears.
- Next, move your shoulders backwards in a circular motion ten times and then forwards in a circular motion ten times.

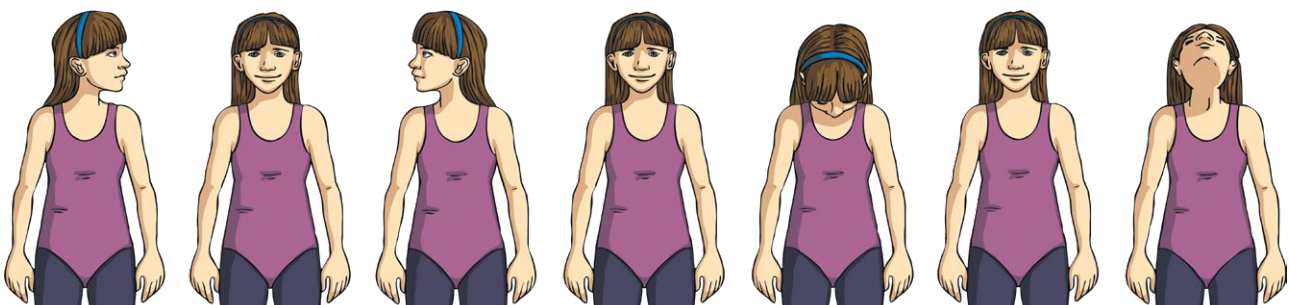


You should feel the stretch in your shoulders.

Neck Stretch

- Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart, looking straight ahead.
- Turn your head to the left, twisting at your neck and then back to the centre.
- Turn your head to the right, twisting at your neck and then back to the centre.
- Put your chin on your chest and then raise it back up so you are facing forwards.
- Repeat this movement: left, centre, right, centre, down, centre, up, centre.
- Make sure you do not roll your neck.

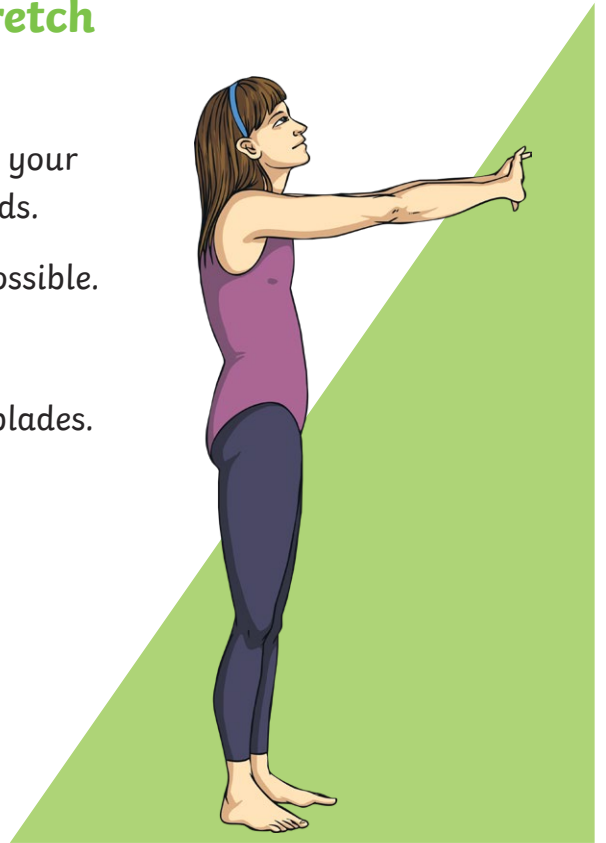
This is a gentle stretch for the neck.



Upper Back Stretch

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Stretch out your arms in front of you and interlock your fingers, making sure your palms are facing outwards.
- Push your hands as far away from your chest as possible.
- Allow your upper back to relax.
- You should feel the stretch between your shoulder blades.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Rest for ten seconds and then repeat.

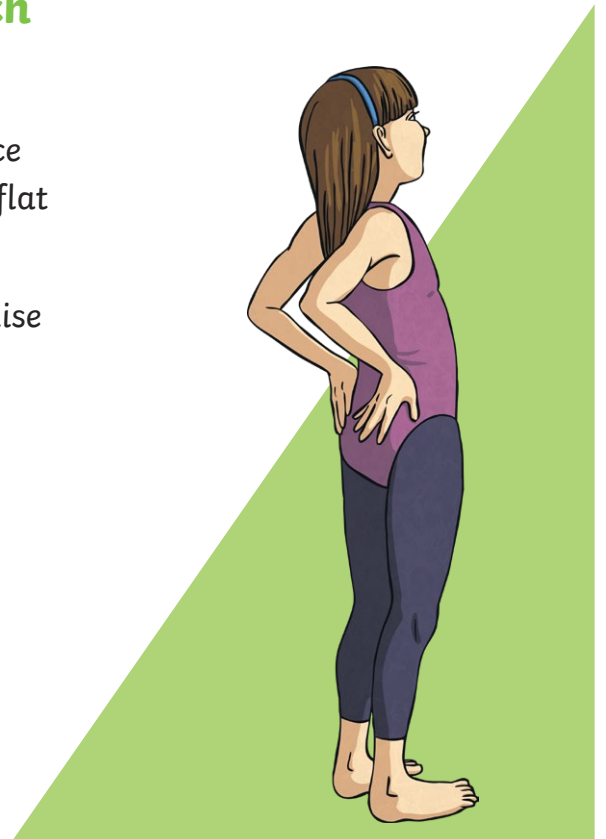
You should feel the stretch between your shoulder blades.



Chest Stretch

- Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Bring both of your arms behind your back and place them at the bottom of your spine with your palms flat on your back.
- Push in towards your back with both hands and raise your chest up.
- Keep your chin up.
- You should feel the stretch across your chest.
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Rest for ten seconds and then repeat.

You should feel the stretch across your chest.



Gluteal Stretch

- Lie on your back on the floor.
- Bend one leg up at the knee, keeping your foot on the floor.
- Twist your body in the opposite direction to your bent knee, keeping your other leg in the same position flat on the floor – do not let it twist, too.
- Bring your bent knee across your body, keeping it bent at a 90° angle.
- Push down on your knee with your hand.
- You should feel the stretch in your bottom (gluteus).
- Hold the stretch for six to ten seconds.
- Swap legs and repeat.



You should feel the stretch in your bottom (gluteus).

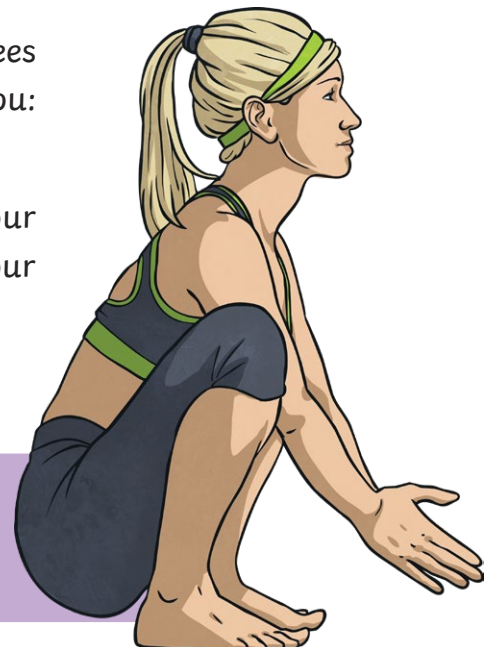
Frog Pose

Ardha Bhikasana

- 1 Squat on the floor, balancing on your toes, knees spread wide, hands on the floor or out in front of you: wherever makes you feel most balanced.
- 2 Look up and inhale. As you exhale, straighten your legs so you are in a standing position and lower your head towards your knee.
- 3 Return to the first position, then repeat.

Benefits

Tones legs and increases hamstring flexibility.
You should feel the stretch in your hamstrings.



Butterfly Pose

Baddha Konasana

- 1 Begin by sitting with the soles of your feet together.
- 2 Wrap your hands around your feet; keep your back straight.
- 3 Gently bounce your knees to flap your butterfly wings.

Benefits

This exercise helps calm the body and mind and is good for fatigue (tiredness).



Elephant Pose

- 1 Bend at the hips.
- 2 Let arms hang low then clasp fingers together.
- 3 Swing arms from side to side like a trunk. Swing whole body from side to side to walk like an elephant.

Benefits

You should feel the stretch in your legs and back.

