

Prior to running you do not want to stretch, research has shown that stretching prior to exercise can actually leave muscles prone to damage. Instead following every run, you should stretch. This allows the muscles to be warm which allows them to be much more elastic like.

Remember:

- DO NOT stretch cold muscles they will become injury prone
 - It is ideal to stretch after a run than before.
- It is a good idea to stretch very lightly prior to doing any speed or up tempo work, but only after a 5 to 10-minute warm-up jog.
- Ease slowly into each stretch
 - DO NOT BOUNCE OR FORCE IT - this may cause a reflexive contraction of the muscle causing a strain or worse yet a tear of the muscle
- Stretches should be held for a minimum of 20 seconds each

1. Supine Hamstring Stretch

Keep your upper body relaxed. Maintain both legs straight, and pull one toward you. You might also try to bend the stretched leg holding it with your hands behind the knee then try to straighten it out as far as possible. You should feel the stretch higher up the hamstring.



2. Gluteal Stretch

Place your foot up on the wall then place the ankle of your front leg just below your knee. If you are a proper distance from the wall the knee of the wall leg will be bent to 90 degrees. As gravity gently brings your lower back towards the floor, you'll feel a stretch in the muscles around the side of your buttocks.



An excellent modification of this stretch is done seated. Assume the same position, but in a chair, then bring your belly button toward the knee of the crossed leg.

3. Butterfly

Hold your feet and gently use your leg muscles to move your knees towards the ground. Push your belly button toward your feet being sure to not round out your low back.



4. Gastrocnemius (upper calf) stretch

Keep the back leg straight and be sure to keep your heel on the ground, push the back heel into the ground. Keep your torso upright and push your hip toward the wall. There should not be very much pressure on the front foot.



5. Soleus (lower calf) stretch

Very similar to the Gastrocnemius stretch but you will stand closer to the wall and bend your knee, be sure to keep your foot flat on the floor. You should feel a stretch in your lower calf. Leaning in toward the wall will increase the level of the stretch; there should be little if any pressure on the other foot.



6. Iliotibial band stretch

Place the foot closest to the wall around behind the other, with both feet flat on the ground. Keep both legs straight, and then lean your hips towards the wall. You should feel the stretch down the outside of your leg and up to your hip. This is a difficult stretch to do properly; it may take practice to do it well.



7. Iliopsoas (hip flexor) stretch

Keep your hips squared to the front. Step forward with one leg try not to let your knee pass over the front of your foot. Be sure to keep your torso upright (if you lean forward it decreases the stretch achieved). Sink your hip toward to ground. For more advanced stretch reach your arm, on the same side of the leg you are stretching, up above your head.



8. Standing quadriceps stretch

Flex your knee and keep your body straight to maximize the stretch. Press your knee down and behind you to intensify the stretch.



9. Kneeling quadriceps stretch against wall

This is a more advanced stretch. Place your back shin and the top of your foot will be placed flat against the wall, then to increase the stretch lean your body back toward the wall. This may not be a good stretch if you have had surgery on your ankle. Also to decrease excessive pressure on your low back keep your back in a neutral position. AVOID arching your low back to reach the wall with your shoulders.



10. Standing hamstrings stretch

With one foot on a chair or ledge, bend your upper leg and move your belly button down onto your thigh (AVOID rounding out your low back). Keeping your chest low, gently try to straighten your bent leg. Be sure that you have warmed up prior to attempting this stretch.

11. Cross-legged sitting gluteals stretch

This is a much more advanced stretch than the gluteal stretch in #2. Start in a cross-legged position with your back upright. Your shins should be parallel to your body. Keeping a straight back, press your belly button forward with arms outstretched, (again AVOID rounding out your low back).



12. Downward-facing dog

Keep your feet about hip-width apart and your hands about shoulder-width apart. Keep your legs straight, keep your hips high, and try to keep your heels on the ground (don't worry if they don't reach). DO NOT round out your low back, the bend should be entirely at your hips (maintaining your back in neutral).



Press your palms and fingers flat into the ground; you should feel as though you're trying to push the floor apart between your hands and feet.

This stretches your hamstrings, gastrocnemius, Achilles tendons, glutes and shoulders.

13. Supine low back twist



Start on your back with both legs straight. Hug your right knee in towards your chest, and bend your knee to 90 degrees. Then roll to your left side, so your right knee touches the floor, you should keep your right shoulder on the ground. Then extend your right arm towards the floor. Hold this position and relax into it with slow deep breathing. Then repeat on the opposite side.

This stretches your glutes, erector spinae (low back), abdominal core, shoulders, and chest.