

Flexibility & Balance



Cool downs using flexibility and balance exercises can help slow the heart rate and breathing, avoid muscle stiffness and soreness, prevent injury, and relax your body.

Work together to pick 3-5 balance and flexibility activities for your cool down. Be sure to include exercises to complement the muscle groups you worked on during cardio and strength training. For example, if you did arms for strength training, pick a few exercises that target arms during your cooldown.

Focus on proper form, lowering your heart rate, and finishing your workout. Do not skip this section, it is important to take your time and let your body cool down at the end of a workout.

Take this time to enjoy each other's company. Talk about something social and reflect on the day's workout together.

Find descriptions and examples of flexibility & balance exercise options in this section (pages 57-71).

Tree Pose



Description: Yoga (balance). Use the Tree Pose to work on your balance and stability. Complete yoga exercises on both sides of the body.

Instructions

1. Standing tall, shift your weight to your right foot, and slowly lift your left foot off the ground.
2. Rest your left foot against your right ankle, calf, or thigh (not knee).
3. Arms can be at your side, together at your chest, out in a "T", or above your head.
4. Find your balance and hold for 30 seconds.
5. Repeat on the opposite side.

Tips & Modifications

- Use the wall or other surfaces to help with balance.
- Keep arms at your waist or closer towards your body to help with balance.
- For more of a challenge, try to raise your arms above your head.



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Warrior Pose



Description: Yoga (flexibility & balance). Use the Warrior Pose to work on your balance, flexibility and stability. Complete yoga exercises on both sides of the body.

Instructions

1. From a standing position, step back with your right foot- making sure you rotate your toes outward.
2. Bend your left knee and slightly lunge towards forward.
3. Extend both arms into a T position with one arm in front and one arm behind.
4. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.
5. Repeat on the opposite side.

Tips & Modifications

- Keep arms at your hips to help with balance.
- For more of a challenge, try to raise your arms above your head.



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Downward Dog



Description: Yoga (flexibility & balance). Use the Downward Dog pose to work on your balance, flexibility and stability.

Instructions

1. From the standing position, bend your knees and reach down to plant hands on the ground.
2. Walk your feet back a few steps and begin to straighten your legs as far as you can or until your heels touch the ground.
3. You should feel the stretch in your hamstrings (back of upper legs).
4. While in this position, keep your head between your arms and look back towards your feet.
5. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.

Tips & Modifications

- Walking your feet farther out or bend your knees to modify the pose.
- For more of a challenge, lift one leg in the air at a time (single leg dog).



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Child's Pose



Description: Yoga (flexibility). Use the Child's Pose to work on flexibility and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. From a kneeling position, sit back on your feet and spread your knees apart with your toes close together.
2. Lean forward with your hands on the ground and reach your arms forward as far as you can and rest your forehead on the floor.
3. You should feel the stretch across your back.
4. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.

Tips & Modifications

- Rest your arms by your side
- Turn head to the side
- For more of a challenge, reach your arms above your head and actively stretch.



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Cat/Cow



Description: Yoga (flexibility & balance). Use the Cat/Cow pose to work on flexibility and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. Start on your hands and knees. Align your hands under your shoulder, and knees under your hips.
2. Keep your back in a flat neutral position.
3. For the cat position, round your back towards the ceiling, and look towards your stomach.
4. Return to a flat back position.
5. For the cow position, arch your back and look up towards the ceiling.
6. Cycle through the cat and cow poses for 30 seconds.

Tips & Modifications

- Cycle through the movements at a slow and controlled pace.



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Forward Fold



Description: Hamstring Stretch (flexibility & balance). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and balance and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. From a standing position with feet together, bend forward at the hips, reaching your arms towards your feet.
2. You should feel the stretch in your hamstrings and back.
3. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds
4. Slowly bend your knees and return to a standing position.

Tips & Modifications

- Keep your knees bent if you are unable to touch your toes.
- For a challenge, try to touch your palms to the ground.
- Alternate bending knees to stretch hamstrings.



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Single Leg Quad Stretch



Description: Quadricep Stretch (flexibility & balance). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and balance and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. Plant your right foot on the ground with arms by your side.
2. Shift weight to your right foot, and slowly bend your left knee, lifting your foot towards your glutes.
3. Grab hold of your left foot or ankle with your left hand and hold for 30 seconds.
4. Release your left foot and repeat with the right side.
5. You should feel the stretch in your quadriceps.

Tips & Modifications

- Use the wall or other surfaces to help with balance.
- Keep your knees close together.
- If you are unable to grab your leg or ankle, perform the single leg quad stretch lying down.



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Calf Stretch



Description: Calf Stretch (flexibility & balance). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and balance and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. Find a wall and place your hands against the wall for stability.
2. Lift your right toes up and place them against the wall, leaving your heel on the ground.
3. Lean your body towards the wall so you feel the stretch in your calf muscle.
4. Hold for 30 seconds.
5. Release your right foot, and repeat on the left side.

Tips & Modifications

- To do this stretch seated, put a strap/band around your foot/feet, legs extended, and pull the strap/band towards your body.



Triceps Stretch



Description: Triceps Stretch (flexibility & balance). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. Lift your right arm up and bend your elbow placing your right hand on your upper back.
2. With your left hand, grab your right elbow and pull towards the left side.
3. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.
4. Repeat with the left arm.
5. You should feel the stretch in your triceps muscle.

Tips & Modifications

- If your flexibility is limited, bring your arm up to your ear and bend your elbow, hold that stretch.



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Wrist Circles



Description: Wrist Stretch (flexion & extension, flexibility). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. Rotate your wrists in a clockwise direction 10 times.
2. Repeat in a counter-clockwise direction.

Tips & Modifications

- Make sure your fingers are relaxed.



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Shoulder Stretch



Description: Shoulder Stretch (flexibility). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. Reach your right arm across your body towards the left shoulder.
2. Grab your right elbow with your left hand and gently pull across your body.
3. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.
4. You should feel the stretch in your shoulder muscles (deltoid).
5. Repeat with the opposite side.

Tips & Modifications

- If your flexibility is limited, cross your arms in front of your body, repeat and switch the top arm each time.



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Chest Stretch



Description: Chest Stretch (flexibility). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. Reach both arms behind your back.
2. Clasp fingers or hands together and open up your chest.
3. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.
4. You should feel the stretch across your chest (pectorals).

Tips & Modifications

- If your flexibility is limited, reach your elbows behind your back instead.



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Runner's Lunge



Description: Hip and Leg Stretch (flexibility & balance). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and balance and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. From a standing position with feet together, take a large step forward with your right foot.
2. Lunge forward placing hands on the ground on either side of your right foot.
3. You should feel the stretch in your hips and legs.
4. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds
5. Slowly bend your knees and return to a standing position.
6. Repeat with the left foot forward.

Tips & Modifications

- If you need help with stability, widen your base of support by spreading your feet out.
- You can also rest your back knee on the ground for more support.
- For more of a challenge, lift your hands off the ground or reach overhead.



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Butterfly



Description: Thigh Stretch (flexibility). Use this stretch to work on flexibility and to lower your heart rate at the end of a workout.

Instructions

1. From a seated position, place the bottoms of your feet together and let your knees fall towards the ground.
2. Sit up straight and lean forward over your feet.
3. Hold for 30 seconds.
4. You should feel the stretch in your inner thigh area (adductors).

Tips & Modifications

- If your flexibility is limited, try sitting with legs crossed.
- For more of a challenge, bring your feet in closer to your body and lean forward.



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