

ESSENTIAL STRETCHES FOR RUNNERS

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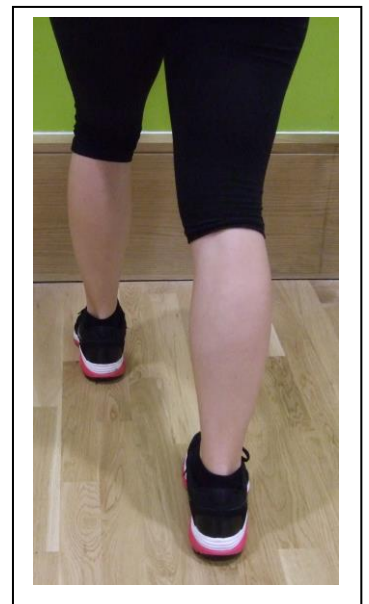
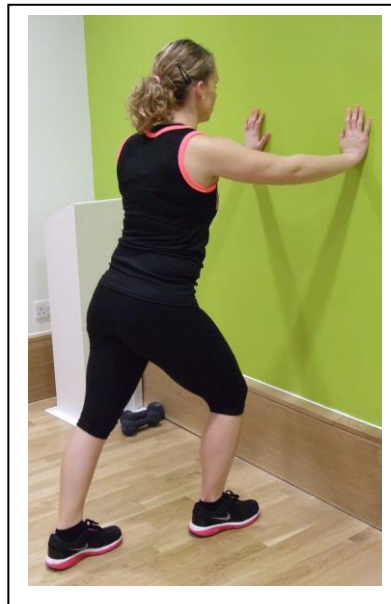
Notes

1. Stretches should form the 4th part of all your running training sessions:
 - Warm up
 - Workout
 - Cool down
 - **STRETCH**
 - Refuel and rehydrate
2. Each of your stretches should be held for around 30 seconds. They are “static” stretches, in other words you get into position then stay still for 30 seconds, holding the stretch and breathing. As you breathe out, imagine a lengthening in the muscle(s) you’re stretching.
3. The stretch should feel strong but not too strong. How can you tell? A good way to gauge whether it’s too much or not enough is to score how you feel out of 10. If you say that 0/10 is no stretch at all and 10/10 is painful, then aim to achieve a maximum of 7 out of 10 for your stretches. NB/ There are some notes next to the stretch pictures (below) about how to increase or reduce the strength of the stretch.
4. There are lots of useful stretches but the ones shown below are your “must-dos” – essential stretches for runners.

NB/ Stretches are best done AFTER your workout and cool down i.e. when your muscles have been warmed up. Stretching “cold” muscles (when you haven’t been moving) is not a good plan.

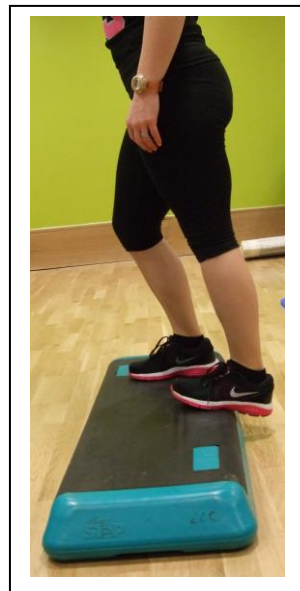
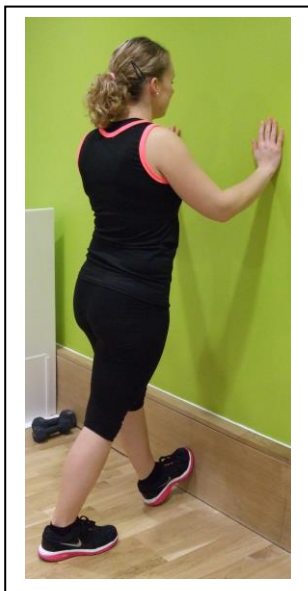
Calf stretch

- Both feet face forwards.
- Front knee is directly above the front ankle.
- To increase the strength of the stretch, take the back foot further back.
- To reduce the strength of the stretch, bring the back foot nearer the front foot.



Note: the back heel is on the ground and both feet are facing forward.

Calf stretch alternatives



See which calf stretch feels best for you.

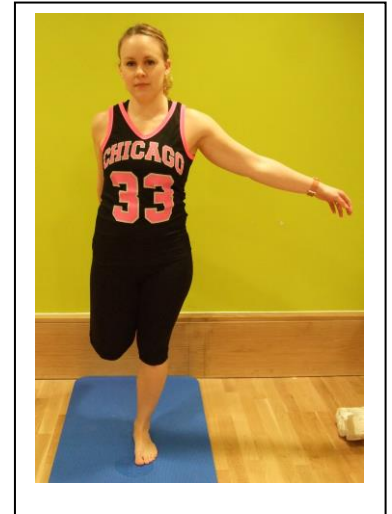
There's nothing to stop you doing all 3 if it feels right and you have the time.

Whichever stretch(es) you choose, hold the position still for 30 seconds and breathe.

*GET INTO POSITION AND HOLD THE STRETCH FOR 30 SECONDS
YOUR STRETCH SHOULD FEEL LIKE 7/10 STRENGTH AT THE MOST*

Front of thigh stretch

- Stand tall, with your back in your normal alignment i.e. not arching.
- Hold your foot/ankle.
- If holding your ankle is too much of a stretch and it's making you arch or twist, then try holding your sock or your trouser leg instead.



Keep your knees close together.

Front of thigh stretch alternative – lying down

Have a pillow or cushion under your tummy to support your back.

Try not to twist your neck.

If you can't reach your ankle then you could try holding your sock instead.



*GET INTO POSITION AND HOLD THE STRETCH FOR 30 SECONDS
YOUR STRETCH SHOULD FEEL LIKE 7/10 STRENGTH AT THE MOST*

Upper front thigh + groin stretch

- Have a cushion, mat or padding under your supporting knee.
- Your front knee is directly above your front ankle.
- Your trunk is upright.
- You should feel a stretch at the top of your thigh/groin on your back leg.
- If the stretch is too strong, bring your back knee in closer.
- If the stretch is too weak take your supporting knee further back.



Upper front thigh + groin stretch alternative – lying down

Pull one knee up and hold, then swap sides.

Have a small pillow for your head and relax your neck.

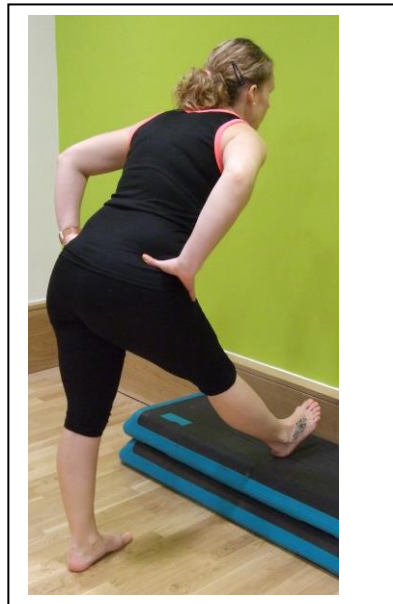


This is not as strong an upper thigh stretch as the one above, but it has the advantage of gently stretching out the lower back at the same time.

*GET INTO POSITION AND HOLD THE STRETCH FOR 30 SECONDS
YOUR STRETCH SHOULD FEEL LIKE 7/10 STRENGTH AT THE MOST*

Back of thigh stretch

- Put one foot up on a step or a log or a box, depending on where you are.
- Lean forward from your hips so your back stays straight.
- Look forward and at the ground some distance away so that your neck stays in line with your back (instead of bending your neck down).



- To increase the strength of the stretch, put your foot up on something higher and/or lean further. To reduce the strength of the stretch, put your foot on something lower and/or don't lean as far.

Back of thigh stretch alternative - lying down

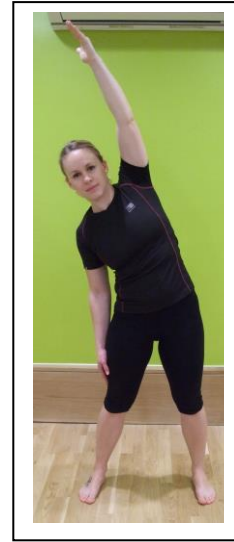
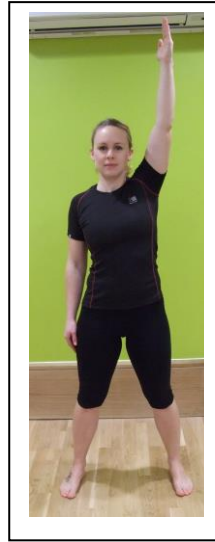
- Relax your neck and shoulders and have a small pillow or pad to support your head.
- If your floor leg is buckling at the knee it means you are trying to pull your stretching leg too far in. Instead, keep it straighter and don't pull as far. If your hamstrings are very tight and you can't easily reach to pull your straight leg towards you then the main standing back of thigh stretch (above) is a better one for you.



*GET INTO POSITION AND HOLD THE STRETCH FOR 30 SECONDS
YOUR STRETCH SHOULD FEEL LIKE 7/10 STRENGTH AT THE MOST*

Side stretch

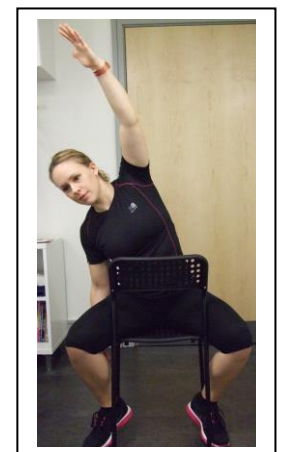
- Reach up to the sky with one arm then lean across until you feel a stretch in your side.
- Try not to bend forwards or backwards. You just lean sideways. Imagine you are standing in a narrow corridor with a wall in front of you and another behind you so can't bend forward or backwards.



- You should feel the stretch in your side rather than your back. If you feel it in your back then try reaching your stretched up arm slightly forward when you reach up and across to the side. (Your back is still straight).

Side stretch alternative - sitting

- Sit up tall then reach up to the sky with one arm and then lean across until you feel a stretch in your side.
- You should feel the stretch in your side rather than your back. If you feel it in your back then try reaching your stretched up arm slightly forward when you reach up and across to the side. (Your back is still straight).



*GET INTO POSITION AND HOLD THE STRETCH FOR 30 SECONDS
YOUR STRETCH SHOULD FEEL LIKE 7/10 STRENGTH AT THE MOST*

Inner thigh stretch

- Note how the foot on the bent knee side is turned outward. It's pointing in the direction you're leaning.
- Your bent knee is directly above your ankle on that side.
- Your hips are facing forward.
- To increase the stretch on your inner thigh, keep your legs still and try leaning slightly forward from your hips. NB/ Keep your back straight when you lean. Imagine your top half is sandwiched front and back between rigid boards as you lean down i.e. it's purely from your hips - your back does not bend.



Inner thigh stretch - alternative



Sit up tall



Lean forward from the hips so that your back stays straight i.e. don't round.

*GET INTO POSITION AND HOLD THE STRETCH FOR 30 SECONDS
YOUR STRETCH SHOULD FEEL LIKE 7/10 STRENGTH AT THE MOST*

Buttock stretch

- Relax your neck and shoulders. If you can't keep your neck and shoulders relaxed while holding your thigh then try wrapping a towel round the back of your thigh and pulling the ends of the towel so that you don't have to reach as far.

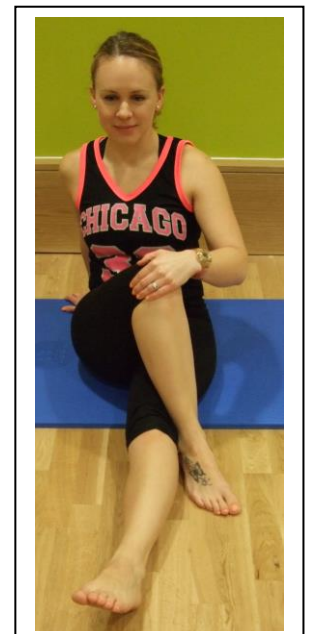


Buttock stretch - alternative

Sit tall, putting one hand on the floor behind you for support.

Keep your hips/bottom on the floor and keep your shoulders facing forward, then pull your knee across.

NB/ If you let your hip lift up and/or your shoulder turn then this becomes a different sort of exercise and not so much a buttock stretch.



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YOUR STRETCH SHOULD FEEL LIKE 7/10 STRENGTH AT THE MOST*