

Bigg Change

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Static stretching based cooldown for Runners

At the end of every run, you complete you should perform a cooldown routine. The most critical element of that routine is to keep upright and mobile. All too often we see runners finish their run and collapse into a chair, sofa, or the ground. This is a dangerous thing to do immediately after any physical activity so please don't do it.

Just like your warmup, cooling down doesn't have to be an elaborate or elongated affair. My suggestion to you is below and you will probably notice you are already doing some of this without realising it

Walk around the garden / kitchen / front room for a few minutes, grab a cold drink, stand at the table syncing your run to Strava and check your Local Legend Status.

At this point your heart rate and breathing will have come down a bit and it is time to do some stretching.

Here are my 4 golden rules for static stretching.

- 1** Stay upright and moving immediately after activity until your heart rate has recovered.
- 2** Never stretch cold muscles, at least not static stretches as outlined in this handout.
- 3** Unless you hold the stretch position for a period of time you aren't stretching.
- 4** Don't pulse or rock when stretching. Going into and out of the stretch position quickly isn't stretching and isn't good for you.

There are two pieces of 'equipment that will make this stretching routine both more enjoyable and beneficial.

1. First, an exercise / yoga mat. But if you haven't got one of these just find yourself a nice soft space like a rug or carpeted room. The first 4, maybe 5, of the stretches are all floor based and won't be much fun on a hard, cold floor.
2. Get hold of a resistance band but if you haven't got one of those to hand then the belt from a dressing gown or even a tea towel will do equally as well



1. Quad stretch

You can perform this stretch lying on your stomach or standing up.

If lying down, bend your right leg and reach behind with your right hand to grip your foot. Pull it towards your glutes, maintaining ground contact with your pelvis, hips and thigh. Keep your knees close together.

If standing, do the same movement as above but concentrate on standing tall and facing forward. Hold for 30s and repeat on your left leg.



2. Calf Stretch

Stand facing a wall. Place your hands on the wall at about shoulder height. With your right foot, place the toes on the wall and the heel on the floor. You want to have your toes as high up the wall as possible whilst maintaining space between your heel and the wall. Keeping your body straight, hips facing forward, lean into the wall over your right foot. Hold here for 30s before repeating with your left foot.



3. TFL / ITB Stretch

From a standing position, take your right foot behind your left leg and slide it out to the left so there is about 40-50cm gap between your left and right feet. Raise your right arm directly above your head and then lean to the left, pushing your right hip laterally to the right side.

You can either hold for 30s or I prefer to hold for around 5s and repeat the movement 4 to 5 times. Don't pulse though, just repeat the entire movement.



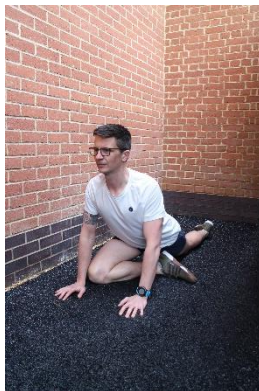
4. Supine Hamstring, Glute & Hip Stretch (aided)

Lie on the floor and loop your band over the ball of your right foot. Extend your leg to be pointing straight up to the ceiling. Grip the band as high up as you can without taking your back off the floor. Hold here for 30s. Release your left hand and allow your leg to drop out to the right and reach the floor, stretching your hip. Hold here for 30s. Swap hands so your left hand is holding the band and bring your leg all the way over to the left side, aiming to get your foot to the floor, stretching your glute. Hold here for 30s. Repeat for your left leg.



5. Runners Lunge

Get into a knee push up position and then bring your right foot up to just inside your right hand. Push your left knee off the ground and extend your left leg. Hold here for 30s. Swap your feet over so your left foot is just inside your left hand and repeat the hold.



6. Piriformis stretch

Start in a similar position to #2 above. Bring your right knee to the ground just behind your right hand and lean forward. If you can, lower your chest and body towards the ground and your bent leg. Hold here for 30s. Swap your legs so your left knee is on the ground just behind your left hand and repeat the hold.



7. Cat & Cow

Get yourself into an all-fours position with your shoulders above wrists, hips above knees. From here arch your back, lowering your head into the space between your arms. This is the Cat. Hold here for a few seconds before moving into the Cow. Return to the all-fours starting position and then drop your hips, bowing your back and raising your head and chest proud. Hold here for a few seconds before returning to the all-fours starting position. Repeat this cycle 4 or 5 times.