

2.01 Stretches

Hamstring Stretch

Start Position: Lie on your back.

Stretch Action: Bend both knees up. Slowly lift your right leg up in the air. Pull your right leg gently towards you using both hands. It is important that you keep both hips and your lower back on the floor. Hold this stretch for 10 – 30 seconds and inhale/exhale your breathing at a slow pace. Repeat this stretch 2 – 3 times on each side.

Special Notes: Stretch to the point of mild discomfort, but never to the point of pain. Do not bounce while stretching. Keep your hips on the mat. To reduce the intensity of this stretch, bend the knee of the stretching leg.

Butterfly Stretch

Start Position: Sit on the floor. Keep:

- back straight,
- shoulders relaxed,
- stomach muscles engaged,
- knees bent, and
- soles of feet in front of you.

Stretch Action: Pull your heels towards you while simultaneously relaxing your knees towards the floor. Hold this stretch for 10 – 30 seconds and inhale/exhale your breathing at a slow pace. Repeat this stretch 2 – 3 times.

Special Notes: Stretch to the point of mild discomfort, but never to the point of pain. Do not bounce while stretching. Do not push your thighs to the floor with your hands or elbows.

Shoulder Stretch

Start Position: You can stand or sit to do this stretch. If standing, stand with feet shoulder-width apart. If sitting, sit with legs in a crossed position with your back up straight.

Stretch Action: Bring your left arm across your chest. Hold it below your elbow with your opposite arm. Keep your shoulders and neck relaxed. Pull your right arm towards your chest to give your shoulder and arm muscles a good stretch. Hold this stretch for 10 - 30 seconds and inhale/exhale your breathing at a slow pace. Perform this same stretch on the right side. Repeat this stretch 2 - 3 times on each side.

Special Notes: Stretch to the point of mild discomfort, but never to the point of pain. Do not bounce while stretching. Straighten your arm, but do not lock your elbow.

Quad Stretch

Start Position: You must stand to do this stretch. If needed, you can hold on to the back of a chair or a wall to help keep your balance. Keep feet shoulder width apart.

Stretch Action: Reach back and grab your left foot with your left hand. Keep your thighs next to each other with your knee pointed down. Do not roll your hips back. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds and inhale/exhale your breathing at a slow pace. Repeat this stretch 2 - 3 times on each side.

Special Notes: Stretch to the point of mild discomfort, but never to the point of pain. Do not bounce while stretching. Straighten the leg that you are standing on, but do not lock your knee.

Neck Stretch

Start Position: You can stand or sit to do this stretch. If standing, stand with feet shoulder-width apart. If sitting, sit with legs in a crossed position.

Stretch Action: Bring your left ear down to your left shoulder. Rest your left hand on top of your head to pull your ear towards your shoulder and give your neck a full stretch. Hold this stretch for 10 - 15 seconds, inhale, and exhale slowly to help you relax. Next, drop your chin down towards your chest and hold for 10 - 15 seconds. Finally, bring your right ear down to your right shoulder. Rest your right hand on top of your head and pull your ear towards your shoulder. Hold this stretch for 10 - 15 seconds and inhale/exhale your breathing at a slow pace. Repeat this stretch 2 - 3 times on each side.

Special Notes: For a deeper stretch, extend your opposite arm out while stretching your neck to the left side. You should be relaxing your neck muscles, using the weight of your head, and resting arm to do the stretching. Do not attempt to force your head down. Stop if you feel any discomfort.