

General stretches Example Sheet

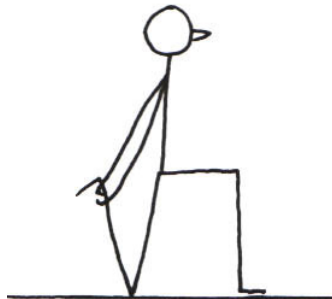
Stretches can be worked into for long periods of time and benefit from being well timed to the breathing. Inhalations are an opportunity to correct and improve the posture while exhalations provide general relaxation and allow you to sink deeper into a stretch.

It may be more beneficial to stretch in the evenings, approximately one hour after exercise or whenever you feel tension or tightness during your working day. Avoid stretching directly after waking in the morning as the body should be warmed and prepared first. Stretches should be held for at least a minute but the longer you work into a posture the more beneficial it may be. However be sure back off a posture when you feel necessary. Only increase a stretch as the tissues relax and lengthen at their own pace. A weekly yoga class would be an excellent way to set aside dedicated maintenance time for yourself and may achieve general whole body release while increasing mindful body awareness.

Quads stretch+: Three alternatives are shown here that vary in strength to suit your abilities at the time. Any of the below may be used on their own or in conjunction with each-other. Feel free to support yourself with a table if necessary. Please cushion the knee where possible.



Half moon



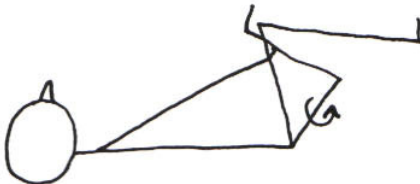
Leg raised (Strong stretch)
Progress to this if half moon becomes comfortable



Virasana

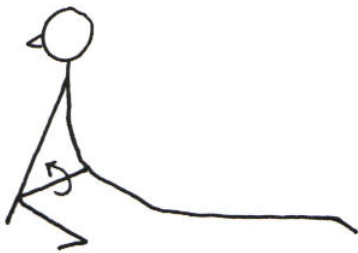
Piriformis stretch:

Similar to swan posture, may be used as an alternative or alongside. Hands are linked behind the knee of the assisting leg): This posture may also incorporate a simple muscle release technique. Push the ankle of the targeted side into the knee of the opposite leg for 10 seconds. Take a deep breath in then exhale and release the push. You should now find you are able to take yourself relatively painlessly into a deeper stretch by pulling towards you with the assisting leg and the linked hands.



Swan posture
(for gluts and Hip
rotators):

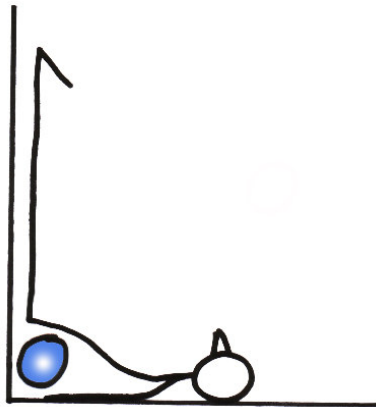
Swan posture. Forward leg is bent and rotated across the body so that the shin lies on the floor. This may be held for anything from 2-10min. Greater periods of time spent in a posture may lead to greater increases in flexibility or a better quality release of over tight muscles. Try to keep the hips balanced and level, avoid sinking the opposite hip towards the floor. The greater the angle of the bent knee the greater the stretch in the hip/buttock area. With each exhalation try to relax the stretched hip more but stay within the pain barrier. Pillows can be placed on-top of the bent leg to allow the weight of the torso to be taken and the head to be relaxed. If you are attempting to use pillows ensure they are built up enough to allow adequate support but not so much that no stretch is felt. The hip should remain at the comfort/discomfort border after the torso and head has been relaxed down onto the pillow. Stay in this posture for as long as you feel necessary.



With pillows to turn this stretch into a relaxation posture.

“Legs up the
wall posture” for
Hamstrings:

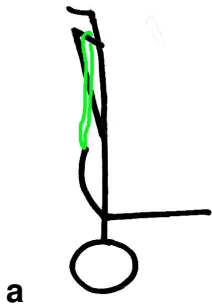
For hamstring lengthening and general lengthening and releasing of the back of the legs. Can bring release throughout the back of the body in its entirety. Pulling the toes down may be sufficient to initiate the stretch. Try to pull the outside edges of the feet towards the floor at the same time. Hold until becomes comfortable. To increase the stretch, begin to bring one leg out from the wall at a time by engaging the fronts of the thighs and locking the knee strongly. Bring the leg out as far as possible while still keeping the pelvis and buttocks against the floor and wall. To work more strongly into each leg individually use a rope and pull slightly further than your muscle strength alone allows you to travel. Don't force a stretch; always stay on the comfort-discomfort border. To change this into a restful recovery position, place a bolster or pillow under the sacrum and relax!



Note: This stretch can be done without the wall with the inactive leg either straight long the floor or bent with the foot flat on the floor near to the buttocks. Be sure to keep the Knee of the stretched leg strong and locked out. Keep pulling the toes down toward you using your own muscle strength.

ITB, gluts and hamstrings:

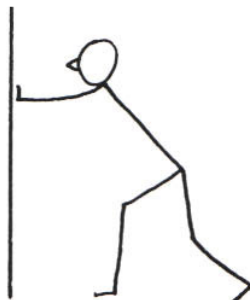
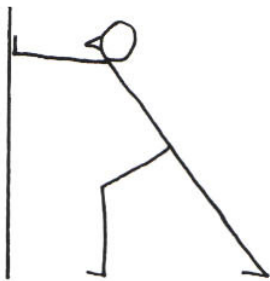
Yoga style ITB stretch – **a)** Laying on your back on the floor, straighten the symptomatic leg directly up as far as you can go while still keeping the leg straight. Place a belt or tie over the foot and hold with the opposite (straight) arm. Allow the leg to gently fall across the body on an exhalation. The opposite arm is held outwards in a T position for support. Try to keep the leg as straight as possible and the hips firmly grounded on the floor as much as you can. **b)** This is quite strenuous so after a few deep breaths in this position, allow the hip to rise off the floor and the leg to bend slightly and continue to let the leg drop until the foot touches the floor. Rest in this position.



Calf stretching sequence

(there are three major aspects to the posterior calf that may benefit from being stretched sequentially):

1. Gastrocnemius (felt high on the calf). Pushing against a wall until stretch is felt
2. Soleus (felt lower down the calf). Simply bend the knee of the targeted leg in the above position.
3. Deep posterior compartment (felt low down in calf and deep). Either dropping off a step or stepping into a wall. Can be treated as an MET (Muscle Energy Technique): Contract the muscles at the front of the shin to draw the heels down towards the floor (on exhalation). Relax in the new position until comfortable then repeat the process.



Extended child posture

(for release of lower back tension and opening of the shoulders):

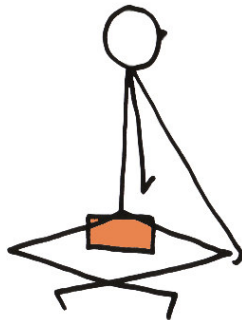
Sitting back on your feet with the arms extended out in front of you. If you get cramp in your feet roll up a thin towel or blanket and place it under the feet just above the roots of the toes. Knees can be together or apart depending on your preference. On the inhalations feel the breath work into the back ribs. On exhalations, keep the buttocks in contact with the feet while walking the fingers forward. Length will be gained through the arms and the spine.



Spinal twist

(for release of rotational tension and holding):

Sitting cross legged on a block (a large text book will do!) to ensure you're sat fully on the sit bones. Place the fingertips of the right hand on the floor behind you, thumb facing in towards you. Place the left hand on the right knee. Inhale and grow tall. Exhale and use the core muscles to twist you around to your right. Allow the hands to assist and twist you further after reaching the limit of your muscular twist. Aim to look at the wall behind you. Hold for 4-5min or as you feel comfortable, constantly trying to perfect the posture and stay tall growing upwards through the crown of the head. Can be performed seated in a chair. Repeat on opposite side. Focus on releasing at the pace of the tissues. Work with the breath, twisting only on exhalations and growing tall with inhalations. Avoid rushing or forcing the twist by levering with the hands.

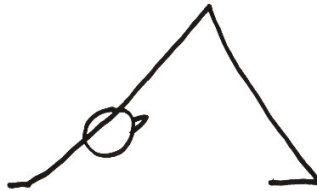
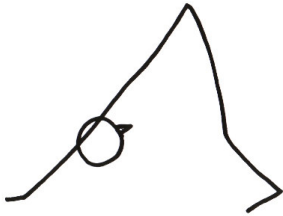


Downward Dog

(Focus more on flattening the back than stretching the backs of the legs at this stage):

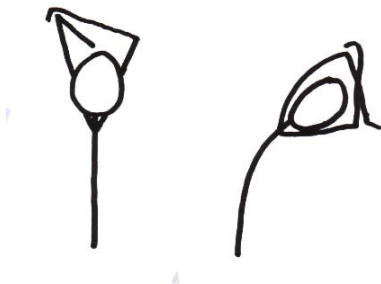
This posture may help to 'traction' the back providing lengthening, space and re-alignment of the spine whilst developing strength. Additionally this posture is excellent for opening the shoulders but be sure to rotate the inner elbow pits so they point towards the ceiling and pinch the shoulder blades together. Also avoid the temptation to scrunch the shoulders into the neck... keep the neck long and the shoulders down away from the ears. When you're happy with your flat backed posture you can begin to try to straighten the legs and push the heels into the floor.

Please take instruction on this posture if it is unfamiliar to you.



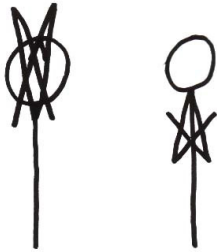
Triceps/lats

Standard triceps stretch with arm down back and assisted at the elbow. Add side bend to bring in the Latissimus Dorsi.



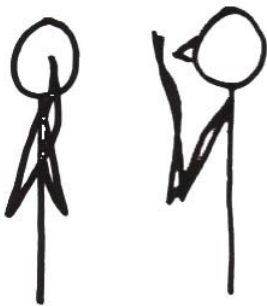
Yoga hug!

Holding the tops of each shoulder and with the elbows stacked one on top of the other use the lowest arm to push both arms upwards towards the ceiling. Repeat with arms swapped over. Helps to stretch throat, mid back and shoulders.



vatayana (horse pose)

Wrap the arms around themselves once and bring together so the palms touch. Then rise towards the ceiling as far as comfortable for a release between the shoulder blades and mid back.



Shoulder stretch + forward bend

From a standing position link the hands behind the back. Take a deep breath in and on your exhalation allow yourself to fall forwards. Allow the knees to bend if you know you are inflexible or have lower back problems. The arms come overhead. Uncurl up to standing on an inhalation and release the hands. Can be repeated as desired. Can be performed in a kneeling position.



IT IS STRONGLY ADVISED THAT YOU CONTACT ALISON CLOWES (07967 839042) OR JACKIE JONES (01743 367186) AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR MORE DETAILED YOGA INSTRUCTION AND ONE-TO-ONE YOGA THERAPY. PLEASE TREAT THIS SHEET AS A GUIDE ONLY AS YOUR THERAPIST IS NOT A QUALIFIED YOGA TEACHER.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

Yoga & Pilates for Everyone – *A complete source book of Yoga and Pilates exercises to tone and strengthen the body, with 1500 step-by-step photographs.* Anness Publishing Ltd 2005. **ISBN10987654321**