

Types of Flexibility

Static/Passive Flexibility

Static flexibility (also called *passive flexibility*) is the ability to assume extended positions and then maintain them using only your weight, the support of your limbs, or some other apparatus (such as a chair or a bar). Example: Being able to sit in the splits

Dynamic/Active Flexibility

Dynamic flexibility (also called *active flexibility*) is the ability to perform active/dynamic movements of the muscles to take a joint through its full range of motion (ROM). Example: Doing a cartwheel into the splits.

Types of Stretching

Ballistic - Can Be Harmful

Ballistic stretching uses the momentum of a moving body or a limb in an attempt to force it beyond its normal range of motion. This is stretching, or "warming up", by bouncing in and out of a stretched position. This type of stretching is not considered useful and can lead to injury. It doesn't allow your muscles to adjust and relax in the stretched position. It may actually cause them to tighten up instead. Example: Bouncing down repeatedly to touch your toes.

Dynamic - Great for Warm-Ups

Dynamic stretching consists of controlled leg and arm swings that take your joints gently through their full range of motion. Do not confuse dynamic stretching with ballistic stretching! Ballistic stretches involve trying to force a part of the body beyond its range of motion. In dynamic stretches, there are no bounces or "jerky" movements. When done during a warm-up, dynamic stretches preserve the strength & power in your muscles needed for activity while still increasing flexibility & warming up your body. Example: slow, controlled leg swings, arm swings, or torso twists.

Static - Great for Cool-Downs

Static stretching involves stretching muscles to their farthest point, holding the stretch, then releasing the tension on the muscle. You repeat this stretching slightly farther than the last time. If you static stretch for a warm-up, the small muscle tears that occur with this type of stretching decrease the strength & power in your muscles needed for your upcoming activity. When done during a cool-down, static stretching greatly increases static flexibility & helps reduce post-workout muscle fatigue and muscle soreness caused by lactic acid build up. Example: Bring your leg up high and then holding it there with your hand, release, and repeat.

PNF - Fastest Way to Increase Static Flexibility

PNF is an acronym for *proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation*. PNF is also referred to as *stretch-contract-relax-stretch*. After initially stretching, contract the muscle being stretched for 7-15 seconds, relax the stretched muscle for 2-3 seconds and then immediately stretch the muscle farther than the initial stretch holding it for 10-15 seconds. Relaxed for 20 seconds before repeating.