

WITHAM RUNNING CLUB

Cool down routine



It is important to complete a cool down routine at the end of each run, particularly after hard and moderately hard sessions. Cooling down gradually and carefully will help the recovery process by restoring the range of movement and flexibility across your body, therefore decreasing the risk of soreness, cramping, strains and developing injuries over time. It is best to complete the cool down immediately following the session, whilst your muscles are still warm. Leaving it longer will mean stretching out cold muscles, risking pulls and other injuries. If it is cold outside, your body will also get cold quickly, so it is recommended that you put on an additional layer of clothing or move to inside whilst doing the static stretching, to further support your body in cooling down gradually.

Post session cool down routine

- 1) Jog/ Walk - gradually slowing the pace for 5-10 minutes. You should feel your heart rate slowing down from the highs of the session and your breathing becoming easier. Stopping a hard/ long run without cooling down slowly could result in poor circulation across your body and lead to feelings of light-headedness or nausea.**
- 2) Static stretches - The following pages contain static stretching guides from our WRC coaches. These can be done in any order, and each stretch held for approx 20-40 seconds. Stretches should never be painful, and if an area is particularly tight, go gently. Many of these stretches have alternative options to try, so have a go and see what works best for you.**

If you have any questions, please ask one of the coaching team.

If you experience any particular pain in an area during or post run, or whilst stretching, seek advice from a physiotherapist or doctor and follow their guidance.

Happy Running!

The WRC coaching team.

The Hamstring Stretch

With James M



fig 1



fig 2



fig 3

The hamstring is the large muscle to the rear of the upper leg. There are several options for stretching the hamstring, here are two examples.

Pointing Toes Upwards (*fig 1*)

- 1) Start with the foot of the leg you intend to stretch straight out in front, with knee soft not locked. Bend the back leg. Keeping both feet pointing forwards and knees together, slowly push your bottom backwards and upwards, and leaning forward from the hips..
- 2) Rest the front foot on the heel and point the toes slightly upwards. Your weight should be on the bent back leg. Leg.
- 3) Depending on your flexibility, you can lightly hold the toe-end of your running shoe as shown, but only lean as far down as to fill a gentle stretch. For some runners this might be shin or higher.
- 4) Alternatively, you can rest your hand on the opposite leg, above the knee. However, DO NOT apply any pressure to the knee.
- 5) Keep your back as straight as possible - engaging your core muscles will aid this and your overall stability during the stretch.
- 6) Once you feel the stretch in the hamstring, hold initially for about 10 seconds. Relax off a bit, then return to deepen the stretch if you can, by pushing your bottom back and pivoting a bit further at the hip.

Feet Firmly on the Ground (*fig 2 & 3*)

- 1) A variation – and James' preference – is to keep both feet firmly on the ground and use the shin as a guide for the hand as shown. You might find this method a more controlled and stable stretch.

NOTES:

- Try to keep your back straight while performing the stretch
- Keep both feet in-line and pointing forwards as much as possible (*fig 3*)
- Rest the hand on the non-stretching leg, but do not apply pressure to the knee
- Be aware of over-stretching - your flexibility will dictate how far you can take the stretch.

The Quadriceps Stretch

With Penny



The quadriceps are a group of 4 muscles located in the front of the upper leg. They are responsible for hip flexion and knee extension.

Standing quads stretch (fig 1)

- 1) Standing on one leg, and bend the other leg at the knee, taking the laces of your shoe in the palm of your hand.
- 2) If you are not balanced, try staring at a still spot ahead of you, or touching onto a wall/ fence.
- 3) Keep your knees loosely together - don't clamp them tightly.
- 4) Push the laces of your shoe into the palm of your hand - you should now feel the stretch in your quads.
- 5) Hold the stretch.
- 6) Slowly release your leg and put your foot down.
- 7) Shake your legs and repeat on the other side.



Quad stretch on the Ground (fig 2)

- 1) Laying on one side, keep your base leg straight out on the ground, and your base arm out on the ground for balance.
- 2) Take the opposite leg into the opposite hand, and again clasp the laces, or ankle, into the palm of your hand.
- 3) Push the laces into your hand, keeping knees loosely together as described above.
- 4) Hold the stretch.
- 5) Release slowly, turn onto the other side and repeat.

NOTES:

- Always push the laces into the palm of the hands, don't pull the foot back - doing this could lead to over extension and excessive stretching of the quads.
- There are alternatives of the standing stretch which involve using the other hand to hold the foot behind you - this will stretch a different area of the quads.

The Glutes Stretch

With James C

Flexibility in the glutes is closely linked with successful functionality of the hips and lower back. The glutes are made up of three separate muscles which work together to lift, lower and rotate your legs.

Standing glutes stretch (fig 1)

- 1) Balancing on one leg, bend and lift the opposite leg and place the foot across the standing leg, at approximately thigh height.
- 2) Ensure your top leg is not resting on your knee joint.
- 3) Bend your standing leg to lower your body. As you do this, you will begin to feel the stretch in your glutes.
- 4) Hold your arms out in front to help you balance, and focus on a still spot in front of you, as pictured.
- 5) Try to keep your upper body and focus looking forwards with your back straight, rather than hunched over to the ground - which would put extra pressure on your back.
- 6) Hold the stretch, then carefully and slowly return your foot to the ground.
- 7) Shake out the legs, then repeat the stretch on the other side.



Sitting glutes stretch (fig 2 & 3)

- 1) Sitting down with one leg straight in front of you, bend the opposite knee towards your chest and over the top of the straight leg.
- 2) Rest your foot of the bent leg on the ground, then turn your upper body towards the side of the bent leg.
- 3) Rest your hand or arm on the bent knee.
- 4) Be careful not to twist too far around in this position, the aim is to feel a gentle stretch in your glutes and over-rotating will not help this.
- 5) Note: where you rest your foot of the bent leg will depend on flexibility - yours may rest on the outside of your knee, or further upwards towards your thigh - be guided by where you feel the gentle stretch.



Floor based glutes stretch - more advanced (fig 4)

- 1) Start by kneeling on all fours on the ground.
- 2) Bring one knee forward to rest behind your hand, then rotate the front leg so the foot points to the opposite side under your body.
- 3) Slide your back leg backwards to lower your hip joint towards your front ankle.
- 4) Keep your shoulders rolled back and away from your ears. Option - hold the position up on your hands (as photo), or lower the upper body onto the elbows.
- 5) This stretch also targets the hip flexors.



NOTES:

- The floor based stretch above is a deeper stretch and only recommended if you have good flexibility and range of motion. Go gently and come out of the position slowly.

The Lower Calf and Achilles Tendon Stretch

With Jodee

The calf, lower calf and achilles are common areas of tightness in runners, and are prone to overuse injuries. The achilles is a tendon which connects the calf muscle to the heel bone and is used to raise and lower the heel in every stride we take, walking or running. This area can easily be overstretched too, so as ever, go gently on these stretches. Jodee is showing us 3 alternative stretches to try.

Standing achilles stretch (fig 1)

- 1) Stand tall facing forward.
- 2) Take one leg one step behind the front leg.
- 3) Ensure both feet are facing forward at all times.
- 4) Bend the knees to lower the body to 'sit down' on an invisible stool. Lower to feel the stretch in the lower calf.
- 5) The weight should be over the back leg, with the front leg more for balance. Keep your upper body upright.
- 6) Release and repeat on the other side.

Using a wall (fig 2)

- 1) Stand facing the wall, using arms out for support.
- 2) Take one foot and rest it up on the wall - getting as much of the sole of the foot on the wall as possible.
- 3) Straighten both legs to feel the stretch.
- 4) Hold the stretch, then repeat on the other leg.

Heel dip using stairs / a kerb (fig 3)

- 1) Stand on the upper kerb or step with both feet.
- 2) Slide one foot back so the heel is off the step and slowly bend the front leg to lower/dip the heel.
- 3) Complete this stretch on a low kerb, or by supporting your balance on a wall or rail (as in the picture) - this is more important when on carpet.
- 4) Option - try this stretch bending the back leg slightly, or keeping it straight (but not locked). You will feel the stretch in a slightly different place.
- 5) Only dip until you feel a gentle stretch. You should be able to support your weight mostly on the front. If you feel like you will slip off, bring your back foot in more.



NOTES:

- There are many variations of achilles stretches online - take them carefully and if there is any pain - get checked out!

The Inner Thigh/ Adductor Stretch

With Sasha



Tight adductor muscles are a common factor in knee and groin pains. They are stabilising muscles which support balance and alignment.

Standing stretch (*fig 1*)

- 1) Take a wide step to the side, ensuring both feet are kept facing forwards at all times.
- 2) Bend one knee forwards, with the other leg out straight.
- 3) Bend the front knee to the point of feeling a gentle stretch on the inner thigh of the straight leg, no further.
- 4) Hold the stretch, then slowly come out of it and repeat on the other side.
- 5) Be careful to make sure the feet are always facing forwards - if they are turned outwards, it is easy to over-stretch.



Seated stretch (*fig 2*)

- 1) Sit on the ground with feet out in front of you.
- 2) Place the soles of the feet together, or as close as you can to this.
- 3) Rest your hands on the feet, or shins as shown, and sit up straight.
- 4) Gently lower your knees closer to the ground if you can, but avoid pushing them down. Only go as far as a gentle stretch, hold then release slowly.
- 5) Note - You might find your feet are further away from your body, or you might be able to hold them quite close, everyone is different.

NOTES:

- As these muscles are linked to stabilisation and balance, they are likely to be tighter if you heavily over-pronate when running. Working on mobility and efficiency of these muscles will help to support efficient running form.

The Hip Flexor Stretch

With Max



Spending a lot of time seated in day to day life will often lead to tightness in the hip flexor region. It can be a troublesome area if neglected, but it has an important role. The hip flexor helps to move your leg and knee upwards towards your body and is under constant use in the circular stride motion of the legs when running.

Standing stretch (fig 1 & 2)



- 1) With feet both facing to the front, take one step forward.
- 2) Lunge straight down so your upper body is held vertical, not leaning forwards.
- 3) Ensure both your feet are facing forwards - they have a tendency to turn in/outwards at this point.
- 4) Check your knee is over your ankle joint (see photo) not leaning over your toes.
- 5) Lower your back knee towards the ground until you feel a gentle stretch. Do not rest it on the ground!
- 6) Options - keep your hands on your hips for balance, or hold them in the air. Never lean on the bent knee in front.
- 7) Hold the stretch, then release slowly, shake out the legs and repeat on the other side.

Stretching on the ground (see *glute stretch card - fig 4*)

- 1) Start by kneeling on all fours on the ground.
- 2) Bring one knee forward to rest behind your hand, then rotate the front leg so the foot points to the opposite side under your body.
- 3) Slide your back leg backwards to lower your hip joint towards your front ankle.
- 4) Keep your shoulders rolled back and away from your ears. Option - hold the position up on your hands (as photo), or lower the upper body onto the elbows.
- 5) This stretch also targets the gluteal region.

NOTES:

- Tightness or weakness in the glutes is also a common factor in people with hip flexor issues.
- If your hip flexors are tight, it is worth spending more time warming up this area *before* your runs by doing running drills which increase mobility in that area. For example, high knees, open/close gates, skipping, backwards jogging.

The TFL/ IT band Stretch

With Karen

The TFL muscle is at the front of the outer part of the hip (think around the coin pocket on a pair of jeans). It helps to create and support hip rotation, flexion and stability. It also helps to create stability around the knee through its connection with the IT band. The IT is a band of tissue which runs from the hip, starting at the glutes and TFL, down the outside of the leg to the knee. These are areas which are notoriously hard to stretch and maintain - but tightness of the muscle or inflammation/ compression of the band could be a cause of many niggles across the body - from hip/ glutes/ knees/ ankles/ back.



Leaning stretch (fig 1)

- 1) Find a wall or something solid to lean against.
- 2) From a standing position, cross one leg behind the other.
- 3) Push your hips towards the same side as your rear leg. In this photo, Karen is pushing her rear leg hip towards the wall.
- 4) Try to consciously tense the glute muscles, which will shift the hips forward more to increase the stretch.
- 5) Keep the upper body upright, avoid leaning forwards.
- 6) This can be done with or without a wall to lean against - but is best felt in the position in the photo.
- 7) Hold the stretch, then release carefully, face the opposite direction to repeat on the other leg.

Free standing stretch (fig 2)

- 1) From a standing position, cross one foot behind the other.
- 2) The leg which is behind is the leg to be stretched - so lift the corresponding arm to the sky.
- 3) The opposite arm stretches down towards the ground - stretching arms up and down simultaneously.
- 4) Shift your hip on the back leg out to the side and lean slightly to the other direction.
- 5) You do not need to lean right over - this stretch is mostly generated by the hip pushing out to the side and the leg position, rather than where the upper body is.
- 6) Hold the stretch, release and repeat on the other side.

NOTES:

- Tightness in the IT band significantly affects movement and extension in the knees. If you have any unexplained knee pain, it is worth seeking advice and checking the status of your ITB/TFL and glutes.



The Upper Body and Back Stretches

With Rachel

When we cool down after runs, we instinctively go through the range of leg muscles which we have used. We mustn't neglect the upper body though - just think of all those times coaches have spoken about upright posture and arm drive! Our upper body, back and core play a vital role in our running efficiency and help us to avoid injuries - so take the time to stretch out post run or any time to improve mobility. Rachel has identified a selection of stretches which can be done to support this area of our bodies.

Shoulder roll (fig 1)

- 1) Stand with feet hip distance apart, relaxing the upper body.
- 2) Moving both arms at the same time simply lift the shoulder up, forwards, down, backwards and up again - creating a circular motion with your shoulders.
- 3) Rotate both shoulders forward for 10 rotations, then rotate them backwards for 10.



Upper back (fig 2)



- 1) Stand with feet hip distance apart, relaxing the upper body.
- 2) Gently lift both arms forwards and clasp the hands together.
- 3) Slowly drop your chin so it is resting on your chest and then push your back outwards.
- 4) Hold this for 10 seconds, come out of stretch, then back again to repeat 3 times.

Lower back (fig 3&4)

- 1) Lie on your stomach, somewhere comfortable, dry and flat - perhaps one for home rather than the street!
- 2) Start by gently lifting both of your legs at the same time. This may only be a small movement and something you can build on slowly.
- 3) When you are comfortable lifting your legs, you can then add in your arms. When you lift your arms, simply lift your head at the same time as your arms.
- 4) Hold this position for a count of 5 and repeat 3 times.
- 5) Please remember not to over-extend on this stretch and only do it if you are not suffering any back niggles.
- 6) Option - raise alternate arms and legs. Again, hold for the count of 5 and repeat 3 times.



NOTES:

- There are many different stretches which can be done for the upper body. It is worth seeking guidance on these if you have any back niggles or issues. Remember a lot of back issues in runners are caused by imbalances and instability elsewhere - which is why whole body strengthening, warming up and cooling down is so important.

The Calf Stretch

With Scott

The calf muscles are at the back of the lower legs and are under constant use in everyday standing and walking. They are common areas of tightness and often areas of cramp and soreness in runners.

Leaning against a wall (fig 1)

- 1) Stand facing a wall. Step forward on one foot, keeping both feet facing ahead.
- 2) Rest your hands on the wall in front of you and push on it.
- 3) Your back heel should be flat on the ground, with your back leg straight but don't lock the knee.
- 4) The front knee would be bent, but not over the toes.
- 5) Hold the stretch, then release and repeat on the opposite leg.



Freestanding (fig 2)

- 1) Repeat the feet and leg positioning as above.
- 2) Keep your upper body relaxed and upright, leaning slightly forward - you will see from the photo this creates a straight line all the way down your body to your ankle.
- 3) Help balance by putting your hands on your hips or by your sides.
- 4) Remember to keep both feet facing forward and both heels flat on the ground.



NOTES:

- Try these stretches before or after the lower calf/achilles ones to feel the different areas of the lower leg which you are stretching.