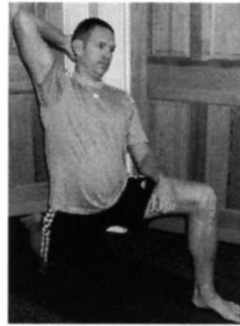


The first seven stretches will cover most of the major muscle groups that become tight with regular running. You can try them in the order presented which creates a nice flow; or pick and choose the ones you need the most. There are many different stretches out there; feel free to substitute as desired. The last four are optional for addressing specific tight areas and also some hamstring alternatives: pick which ones you like. Stretching exercises can be performed daily and are best done when the muscles are warm (i.e. - immediately after your run.) Stretching should not hurt; don't stretch beyond a comfortable level. Don't bounce during the stretch. Do breath deeply. Hold each stretch 10-30 seconds. Always stretch both sides even if we have established that one side is tighter.

Stretch: Hip Flexors

Start in a kneeling position as shown with the right knee down. Keeping your back straight (but not arched), shift your weight forward until a stretch is felt along the front of the RIGHT hip. You can add a very slight bend to the left to further isolate the muscle. Don't allow the left knee to go past the left toes, scooting the left foot forward if necessary.



Stretch: Gluts: Prone



Start on your hands and knees. Bring the right leg underneath you as shown, using your hands to pull it there if necessary. Sliding your left leg back, drop your torso as low to the floor as possible until you feel the stretch in the RIGHT buttock. Drop down onto your elbows and relax your head and neck.

Stretch: Sartorius/ Hip Flexor



Starting from the previous gluteal stretch, support your upper body with the right hand centered just in front of the right leg. Then grasp the left ankle with the left hand until the stretch is felt along the front of the left hip and thigh.

"Downward Dog"



Downward Dog is a yoga pose that stretches both the hamstrings and calves. Assume the "inverted V" position as pictured. Focus on pushing with your arms and straightening the legs as far as they will go until you feel a comfortable stretch in the hamstrings (which might not be completely straight.) Also work towards trying to get the heels to touch the ground (again, you might not be able to.) Keep the neck and head relaxed.

Hamstring Stretch (Standing)

This is one of the best hamstring stretches I have found. Start by standing up straight and arch your back. Then, keeping your back as straight as possible, bend your knees enough to allow you to reach down and grab your toes. Slowly try to straighten the knees just to where you feel a good stretch through the back of the legs. Hold. *It is important to only attempt this stretch only after warming up.*



Adductor Stretch



Slowly slide the feet apart towards the "splits" position while resting the hands on the ground. Keep going slowly until you feel a gentle stretch along the insides of the legs (which, if you're anything like me, will be well before you reach a "split.") When done stretching, come up out of the position slowly and gently. *This stretch should not be done aggressively unless you are thoroughly warmed up.*

Calf Stretch

There are five major muscles comprising the calf. To best isolate the tightest one(s), do one foot at a time. Wearing shoes, stand with the ball of the foot over the edge of a stair step. Use gravity but also push with your arms to really accentuate the stretch through the back of the calf. Try turning slightly to the side as shown to better find the tightest areas.



Calf-Hamstring Combo Stretch

This is a good stretch for the entire back of the leg and calf. Stand with both balls of feet on the edge of a stair step. Bend one knee to isolate the opposite side more. Keeping the back straight, bend forward and rest the hands on the next step up. Go forward until you feel a stretch down the back of the thigh and calf.



Stretch: Gluts: Supine

Lie on back with arms to the side. Pull one leg across the body as pictured until a stretch is felt in the gluts. You can try different angles to feel where it is the tightest. If possible you can try placing the left foot flat on the ground and then lightly push the left glut down towards the floor to intensify the stretch. Hold 10-30 seconds and then repeat on the other side.



Iliotibial Band Stretch



Lying on back, hook a belt or yoga strap around the arch of the left foot. Allow the foot to fall over the right side until a stretch is felt along the side of the left leg. It is helpful to have a piece of furniture to be rest the left foot on during this stretch.

Stretching: Hamstring - Wall

Lying on floor with right leg on wall, other leg through doorway, scoot buttocks toward wall until stretch is felt in back of thigh. Maintain a light contraction in the quads (keeping knee straight.) Hold 10-30 seconds. This is a good one to try some Post-Isometric Relaxation stretching: Push your right leg into the wall and hold for five seconds, relax, and then scoot a little closer to the wall. Repeat 3 times.

