

D Y N A M I C S T R E T C H E S

In order to prevent injuries, players should do warm-up and cool-down routines with stretching before playing tennis. Stretching will also help you to recover faster after play, reduce soreness and prepare you for the next time you exercise.

Research shows that dynamic stretching (stretching with movement) is most effective in warm-ups, and that static stretching (stretching without movement) is best post-play.

Avoid sudden, jerky movements and bouncing while you stretch. If you feel pain, stop immediately and seek medical attention if necessary. Consult your physician before beginning any exercise program.

Before Playing

Warm-up Exercises

Begin with five minutes of walking, light jogging, jumping jacks or side shuffling. Mix the activities for variety. The purpose of the warm-up is to raise your body temperature, ready your heart and lungs for exercising and improve overall muscle function. The goal should be to reach the point of beginning to perspire.

Upper Body Stretches

Arm Circles

Target muscles: Deltoid muscles and rotator cuff (shoulder)

Hold your arms out to your sides at shoulder height with palms down and rotate them in small forward circles. Perform 10 forward and 10 backward circles. Then do 10 forward and 10 backward large arm circles, using the shoulders' full range of motion. You should feel a slight stretch in the shoulders as you perform the exercise.

Internal/External Rotation

Target muscles: Rotator cuff (shoulder)

Hold your arms out to your sides at shoulder height and bend the elbow 90 degrees so your fingers point up toward the sky. Using the shoulders' full range of motion, rotate your shoulders forward once and then backward once in a controlled manner. Do 10 repetitions.



Wrist Circles

Target muscles: Wrist flexors and extensors in the forearm

Hold both arms out in front of your body at shoulder length with the palms facing down. Rotate your wrists in clockwise circles, using the full range of motion to feel a slight stretch in the forearm muscles. Perform 10 clockwise and 10 counter-clockwise circles.

Wrist Flexion and Extension

Target muscles: Wrist flexors and extensors in the forearm

Hold both arms out in front of your body at shoulder length with the palms facing up. Flex your wrists by bending the hands toward the body; then extend them away from the body. Use the complete range of motion in the wrist. Do 10 repetitions alternating one flexion and one extension.

Lower Body Stretches

Toe and Heel Walks

Target muscles: Calf and lower leg

Walk on your toes from sideline to sideline; repeat while walking on your heels.

Straight-leg Swings

Target muscles: Hamstrings (back of thigh) and hips

Holding onto fence, swing one leg forward (with knee straight) as high as you can without discomfort or until you feel a stretch in the back of the leg. Perform 15 leg swings forward, 15 backward; switch legs.

Alternate Toe Touch

Target muscles: Hamstrings (back of thigh) and hips

Stand with the left leg forward, while keeping the knees straight, but not locked. With your right hand, reach down toward the left foot as far as is comfortable, to the point of feeling a light stretch in the back of your leg. Then stand up all the way, step forward with the right leg and reach for the right foot with the left hand. Walk from sideline to sideline, standing up all the way between each step/reach.



Long Walks

Target muscles: Hip flexors (front of hip) and quadriceps (front of thigh)

Walk from sideline to sideline with extra long steps, keeping your back leg nearly straight and moving the hips forward until you feel a light stretch at the front of the hip on the same side as your back leg.

Forward Hurdle Walk

Target muscles: Inner and outer thighs

Move your right leg backward, up and around to the front as if you were stepping over a hurdle that is approximately waist-high. Walk from sideline to sideline while alternating legs.



Cross-over Hip Stretch (Grapevine)

Target muscles: Outer thighs

Facing the net, cross your left leg over your right leg and push the right hip out until you feel a light stretch in the outside of your hip. Stand up straight and step to the right with your right foot. Continue to walk sideways by repeating the steps above. When you reach the sideline, reverse the movement and walk back to the left, crossing over with your right leg.



Torso Stretches

Standing Trunk Rotations

Target muscles: Abdominal and lower back muscles

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands on your hips. Rotate your torso by leaning forward from the waist, then moving to the left, back and right. Do 10 repetitions. Then reverse the directions and do 10 more.

Diagonal Chops to the Knee

Target muscles: Abdominal and lower back muscles

Stand up straight with your feet shoulder width apart. Bring your left knee up and your right elbow down until they touch in the middle. Stand up straight and repeat the exercise on the other side of the body. Perform 10 repetitions of one chop to the left and one to the right.



After Playing

Warm-down Exercises

End with five minutes of walking, light jogging, jumping jacks or side shuffling. Mix the activities for variety. The purpose of the warm-down is to rid the body of lactic acid and other waste products and to gradually reduce your body's core temperature and heart rate.

S T A T I C S T R E T C H I N G

Do these stretches on both sides of the body. Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds while you inhale and exhale slowly.

Knee/Chest Flex

In a standing position, bend one leg and grasp it with both hands behind the knee and slowly pull your leg to your chest.



Hamstring Stretch #1

Lay on your back and bend both knees. Straighten one leg and raise it. Use your hands to gently increase the stretch. Point your toes toward your face to stretch the calf.

Hamstring Stretch #2

In a seated position, place the foot of the one leg against the inside of the knee of the other leg. Try to bring the chest to the thigh by bending forward from the hips. Keep the back straight. Pull your toes back to point toward your face.



Spinal Twist

In a seated position, place the left foot on the outside of the right knee. Bring the right arm around the left knee, resting the elbow above the outside of the left knee. Slowly turn your head and upper body to the left to look over your left shoulder.



Quadriceps "Stork" Stretch

Stand on one leg (if necessary for balance, place one hand on a wall). Bend the opposite knee and grasp the ankle. Keep your back straight and buttocks tucked under. Do not turn or twist your knee.



Groin Stretch

Standing: Stand with your legs greater than shoulder width apart. Place hands above the knee. With toes pointed forward, slowly bend the knee your hand is on until you feel a stretch in the groin area. Shift your weight to the left, then repeat to the right.



Sitting: Sit on the floor. Bring the bottoms of your feet together and pull toward your body. Place your elbows on your knees and try to push down. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.



"C" Hip Stretch

Stand with your right hand on your hip, your feet flat with your weight on your right leg and your left leg crossed in front of it. Gently push the left hip out. Increase the stretch by standing further from the wall.



Posterior Shoulder Stretch

Cross your left arm over the front of your body and pull it toward your body (angling downward) using your right hand. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.

Shoulder Stretch

With your left hand, hold a racket behind your back by the throat or handle with the head of the racket pointing down. With your right hand, slowly pull the racket head down, bringing your left elbow to your ear and pointing it to the ceiling. Then slowly pull up with the left arm, pointing the lower elbow to the floor.



Calf Stretches

Extend one leg behind you while keeping the other leg forward. Keep the back leg straight with your heel on the floor and the foot pointing forward.

(A.) Bend the knee of the front leg. Do not arch your lower back.

(B.) Bend the back leg, keep the weight of your body on the front leg.



A



B

Forearm Stretch

Extend one arm straight in front of you with the palm up. Use the opposite hand to gently stretch the wrist back (extension). Turn the palm down and gently stretch the wrist downward (flexion).



This guide was produced by Cleveland Clinic Sports Health in conjunction with the United States Tennis Association.

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Guide to Stretching for Beginning Tennis Players

