

Daily Dozen

The following stretching exercises are supplements to the Taekwondo workout. Stretching should not be done with cold muscles, so do something before beginning to warm up. A warm bath, sauna, or light exercise are fine. Also, when doing stretches, reach and extend--do not bounce. Because muscles need oxygen to stretch, remember to breathe normally while in the extended position.



1. We'll start by stretching the groin and legs without stressing the knees. Slowly reach for your foot, with your face down toward the knee. Maintain the extended stretch position for seven seconds; relax for three seconds; extend again. Repeat three times on each side. (Remember to breathe normally and don't bounce!)



2. Sit on the floor, feet together; reach for your feet, face toward knees. Maintain extended stretch position for seven seconds. Repeat three times. Remember to breathe normally. (As you exhale, try to extend a bit more.)



3. With feet extended to a stretch but comfortable position, reach out in front, trying to put chest on the floor. Don't bounce, and breathe normally as you hold for seven seconds; relax for three seconds. Repeat three times. Don't be concerned if your "splits" aren't wide. You will gradually improve.



4. Sit on the floor with your knees up; place your hands on the floor, fingers pointing back. Lift to "table-top." Keep your torso level...no sagging! Relax your head, letting it drop. Hold position for seven seconds; lower to floor and relax for three seconds. Lift again. Repeat three times.



5. Place your foot flat on the floor, next to your knee. Place your bracing hand close to your body, and keep your back very straight. As you twist, keep both buttocks flat on the floor. Maintain twist for seven seconds; relax for three seconds. Repeat three times on each side.



6. Place your hands under your shoulders and lift, arching your back while keeping your hip bones flat on the floor. Maintain stretch for seven seconds; relax for three seconds. Repeat three times.



7. Reaching behind you, grasp your ankles, and arch your back. Lift your ankles higher to improve stretch. Maintain position for seven seconds; relax for three seconds. Repeat three times.



8. Lie flat on your back, extend arms straight out, palms down. Raise both legs together until they are straight up. Lower legs to left side while turning face to the right. (Do not let legs rest on the floor.) Raise legs to straight up position again. Lower legs to right side while turning face to the left. Raise legs to straight up position again. Lower legs to right side while turning face to the left. Raise legs to straight up position again. Lower legs slowly to the floor. Repeat three times.



9. Lie flat on the floor with legs together. Raise legs together until toes touch floor behind head. (Don't be concerned if you cannot touch the floor with your toes. Maintain control at first by bracing your back with your hands, and you will improve.) Maintain position seven seconds. Lower legs slowly. Relax for three seconds; repeat three times. Remember to breathe normally.



10. Lie on floor with knees up. Hands are placed next to your head, palms down, fingers pointing toward your shoulders. Arch back and lift. Hold lift for seven seconds; slowly lower to floor. Relax three seconds and lift again. Repeat three times.



11. Support heel on a table top or bar (or have a partner hold your heel). Bend the standing (back) leg with toes turned outward. Reach for foot, stretching face slowly toward the knee. Maintain stretched position for seven seconds; relax for three seconds. Repeat three times on each side.



12. Support side of foot. Pivot standing foot with toes pointed out. Keeping back straight, stretch toward extended foot. Maintain stretched position for seven seconds; relax for three seconds. Repeat three times on each side.