

# Summer Stretching Guide

## Five Stretches to Practice Over Your Break

Taking breaks is important, but we also want our students to maintain the great progress they've made this year. These 5 stretches will help them maintain their flexibility so that they are ready to jump back in when they return!

### Calf Stretch with Tape Measure

Place a tape measure or ruler against the wall, with 0 touching the wall and the numbers running into the room. Standing parallel, place the tip of your right big toe at the 5 inches (12.7 cm) mark. Lift your left foot off the ground so that all of your weight is in your right foot. Gently bend your right knee and allow your right kneecap to move towards the wall. Maintain this shape for 30 seconds.

The goal is to have your kneecap touching the wall, toe at 5 inches, and heel on the ground. Once 5 inches becomes an easy distance, begin moving your foot farther from the wall. Repeat with your left leg.

### Hip Flexor Stretch

With both legs parallel, take your right foot back and come into a high lunge shape. Your right heel may or may not be on the ground--your focus is on your right hip flexor. Experiment with the shape a little bit to see what stretches best for you. People often like to do this stretch near a wall or the kitchen counter so they have something to hold on to for added stability.

- \* Some people prefer a straight back leg
- \* Some like a bent back leg
- \* Squeezing your glute muscles may change the stretch
- \* Try bending your spine to the left and right to see if you can find that "sweet spot"

Once you've found your best stretch, maintain the shape for 30 seconds, then repeat with your left leg. Experiment on both sides since your perfect stretch might be different on each side.



### Teacher tip:

Calf Stretch with Tape Measure is a great stretch to take a photo of before the break so that dancers can appreciate all their hard work paying off when you also take an "after" picture when they return in the fall!

### Did you know?

In ballet class we almost always work turned out, but your body often gains flexibility more efficiently in parallel. Make sure students double-check their form as they stretch so these short minutes have the biggest impact possible.

## Glute Stretches

It is important to keep both of your sitz bones on the ground during these stretches. If you have trouble doing this or balance seems difficult, try sitting on a yoga block, a pillow, or a folded towel. Stretching with a prop and correct alignment is much more beneficial than no prop/no alignment. And no, you don't need to practice all three of these. Experiment and find the one that is the right level of challenge for you.

- \* Seated Glute Stretch: Sit with your legs bent in front of you, then fold your left leg, sliding the left foot under the right knee toward the right hip, and fold the right leg in the opposite direction, stacking it on top of the left. Inhale and lengthen your spine upwards, exhale and fold forwards. Hold this folded shape for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other leg. *If this stretch feels easy, try . . .*
- \* Fire Log Stretch: Sit with your legs bent in front of you, begin to turn out both hips, then stack your right ankle over the left knee, and right knee over the left ankle. Be sure to keep your shins parallel and feet flexed. Inhale and lengthen your spine upwards, exhale and fold forwards. Hold this folded shape for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other leg. *If this stretch feels easy, try . . .*
- \* Cow Face Stretch: Begin like the Seated Glute Stretch but stack the right knee directly on top of the left knee, with the knees directly in front of your midline. Inhale and lengthen your spine upwards, exhale and fold forwards. Hold this folded shape for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other leg.



### Resource spotlight


If you're looking for a flexibility certification for yourself or a done-for-you program, I love mUvmethod! I've been certified myself since 2020 and it has been a great asset to my students (and to my own self-care).



## Why only 30 seconds?

Overstretching can lead to muscle strains, joint instability, and even muscle or tendon damage. 30 seconds per stretch, done consistently, will lead to better dancer health and flexibility than longer sessions

<h2>Box Splits</h2>	<p>This is a great stretch for your rotator muscles but it can be a little hard on your knees. If your knees are uncomfortable during this stretch, make sure you are flexing your feet and feel free to do this with a couple of pillows under your knees while you build flexibility.</p> <p>Lying on your stomach, bend both knees, turn out in your hips, and bring your knees parallel with your hips. Your pelvis will lift off the ground--go ahead and let it! Check that your ankles are directly below your knees and your feet are flexed. Ankles and knees on the ground are important, your pelvis will end up where it needs to. As you practice and become more flexible, your pelvis will get closer to the ground. When you've found this almost-rectangle shape, maintain the shape for 30-60 seconds.</p>
<h2>Half-Split</h2>	<p>Once again, you may want to use a pillow or folded towel to help your knee be more comfortable. But this will also reduce your stability to make sure you are near something stable in case you want support as you get settled.</p> <p>Begin in a high kneeling position. Bring your right leg forward and flex your right foot. Make sure you stay parallel. Inhale and lengthen your spine upwards, exhale and begin to fold forward. You can place both hands on your thigh, your shin bone, or on the ground with one hand on each side of your right foot. Maintain this shape for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other leg.</p>



**“Everything we want to do in life requires discipline. And like strength, flexibility, and endurance, it can be built up over time.”**  
 —Laird Hamilton

**Myth:** stretching is a good way to warm up

**Fact:** dynamic stretches—where you gently move through your range of motion—can be part of a great warm up sequence. But static stretches—the kind where you hold the stretch—should be saved for after class

### Qualities of a good stretch

- you hear yourself saying “oooooh” but not “ouch” · you can easily have a conversation with someone as you stretch · you feel more calm after your stretching than you did when you started ·

# Summer Stretch Challenge Log

Stretch Name	Days Stretched	Body Awareness Insights
Calf Stretch with Tape Measure	Week 1: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 2: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 3: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 4: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Hip Flexor Stretch	Week 1: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 2: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 3: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 4: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Glute Stretches	Week 1: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 2: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 3: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 4: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Box Splits	Week 1: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 2: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 3: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 4: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Half-Split	Week 1: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 2: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 3: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Week 4: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	