

Flexibility

Flexibility is trainable — and is intrinsic to every athletic skill or technique, no matter how simple, complex or power-oriented. It is also movement-specific, which is why an increase in single-joint range of motion is not our only objective. Through a combination of functional stretching and strengthening, your muscles and tendons can increase in length, size, elasticity and resiliency; and their ability to act in a ballistic "spring-like" manner during explosive movements. The net result: improved mechanical/metabolic efficiency, technical proficiency and injury resistance.

TRAINING METHODS

To achieve optimal gains in flexibility, you must:

1. Perform your exercises in a full range of motion. This improves your "active mobility", i.e. the ability to safely and effectively use your range of motion during dynamic movements.
2. Stretch only once your muscles are warmed up. When muscles are cold, they are resistant to lengthening and you will not get as good of a stretch. Warm-up to stretch, don't stretch to warm-up.
3. Stretch after each workout. Doing so will result in less soreness, and quicker recovery between workouts.

INDIVIDUAL STRETCHING

You should dynamically stretch each muscle that you will be working during your workout. When static stretching, after your workout, position yourself so that you feel each stretch in the belly of the muscle(s) and not the joint(s).

In order to have a beneficial effect, each stretch must begin gradually and be held long enough for this tightness to subside. Statically (without bouncing) stretch each muscle group to your comfort limit for 8-10 seconds, relax and repeat. You will be able to stretch a little further with each successive rep. As you develop tension in the muscle being stretched contract the antagonist to this muscle and physically aid the movement (i.e., stretch hamstrings and contract the quads and hip).

QUALITY

The same principle applies to all aspects of training: you get out of it what you put into it.

Static stretching should not be done before strength/power training, it has been shown to cause a decrease in the muscles ability to develop force.

Static stretching should be performed at the end of a training session, this is the best time to relax and develop maximum flexibility with muscles that are pre-exhausted and thoroughly warmed-up.

Stretching should not be Painful.

Stretch so that you feel tension in the belly of the muscle being stretched, not the connection points at either end of the muscle.