



Pilates Flex and Stretch: a Dynamic Flexibility Program

Prayer → Cat → Camel

Position: Inhale—Start on all fours.

Motion:

Prayer—Exhale as you sit back onto heels, lower head, tuck chin, and reach arms out.

Cat—Inhale as you arch your back up and hollow out abdominals while your head remains tucked.

Camel—Exhale and lower abdominals and reach chin toward ceiling. Tuck chin and sit back into Prayer position.

5 reps total



Pilates abdominal roll-up

Position: Lying on your back, legs are together, toes are flexed. Arms are above your head.

Motion: Inhale, lift arms up, tuck chin, and use your abdominals to sit up and then continue to fold at the waist as you reach past your toes. Legs should stay fixed the whole time. Exhale as you slowly use your abs to lower yourself back down to the floor and return arms to starting position above head.

5 reps total



Dynamic hamstring

Position: Lying on back, hip and knee at 90 degrees. Engage abs as head is lifted. Both hands are behind the knee.

Motion: Straighten leg up to the ceiling, then return to start position with toe pointed.

10 reps each leg



Single leg pull-in's with a bent knee

Position: Lying on back, hug one knee into chest, opposite leg straight but off the floor 2 inches. Both toes are pointed the entire time.

Motion: Pull one leg into chest for a 2 count while opposite leg is straight, then switch legs. Neither foot touches the floor. Use abs to keep back flat on mat and to further open up the stride angle without arching back.

7 reps each leg (alternate legs)



Scissor-single leg kicks

Position: Lying on back, hold one leg straight up at your calf with both hands. The opposite leg is straight but off the floor 2 inches. Both toes are pointed the entire time. Engage abs as head is lifted and keep back flat.

Motion: Pull one leg up into chest for a 2 count while opposite leg is straight, then switch legs. Neither foot touches the floor. Use abs to further open up the stride angle.

7 reps each leg (alternate legs)



Half-split with cobra pushup

Position: L leg is in front of you in a figure 4 position, R leg is extended straight behind you. Both elbows are on the floor and head is tucked.

Motion: Inhale to prep. Exhale as you lift upper body to cobra position, lifting chest and chin to ceiling. Try to deepen stretch in hip flexor. Relax and lower back to starting position, deepening the stretch in the lateral hip.

3 reps each leg (6 total)



Saw

Position: Seated. Both legs are straight and a little past shoulder-width apart. Toes are flexed. Sit up so that the chest is lifted while both arms are out to the side.

Motion: Inhale, rotate, and twist to L side. Then exhale and reach down as you try to saw off your L pinky toe with your R pinky finger. The L hand reaches behind you in an arm-extended position. To switch sides, inhale as you lift chest back up and twist to the R side. Exhale and reach toward your R pinky toe with your L pinky finger. The R hand reaches behind you in an arm-extended position. Continue to alternate sides.

7 "saws" each leg, (alternate sides)



Seated spine twist

Position: Seated with legs straight, toes are flexed. Chest is lifted while arms are extended and parallel to your legs.

Motion: Inhale as you rotate out to the L side. R arm remains in line with legs, the L arm reaches behind you. Exhale as you return L arm to starting position. Then switch to rotate to the R side. Continue to alternate sides.

5 "spine twists" each side, (alternate sides)



Seated spine stretch forward

Position: Seated, legs are shoulder-width apart, toes are flexed. Chest is lifted, shoulders are back.

Motion: Inhale, tuck chin. Exhale, reach forward with both arms toward your toes, using your abs to fold at the waist. Keep arms parallel to your legs. Sit back up to return to starting position, lifting chin back up, and pinching shoulders back.

5 reps total



Lateral hip roll-ups

Position: Lie on your back, with both knees bent. Cross one leg so that the ankle is over the thigh. Leg is in figure 4 position. Place both hands behind thigh of the other leg.

Motion: Inhale, pull leg into chest so that hips roll up, exhale, and return to starting position.

5 reps each hip (10 total)



Tree stretch

Position: Seated, both knees are bent, spine is straight.

Motion: With both hands holding behind L knee, flex and extend your knee 5 times so that your left toe taps the floor with each rep. After the 5th rep straighten the leg toward the ceiling with your toe pointed, then climb your hands up the leg. At the top, pull your leg closer to your body to deepen the stretch. Next, climb down your leg as you lower your upper body to the floor.



Tree stretch (continued)

Pull your leg in again, and then use your abs as you climb back up your leg and pull at the top. Bend knee to return to the starting position. Switch to R leg.

2 reps each leg (4 total)



Mermaid

Position: Seated off to R side or "Mermaid" position.

Motion: Inhale, reach L arm up over your head (lengthening through the waist), while the R arm is bent on the floor. Then exhale as you fold over at the waist, bringing L hand to floor, inhale and reach your R arm back up, exhale and counter-stretch to the opposite side. Repeat and then switch off to L side or opposite mermaid position.

2 reps to each side (4 total)



Pretzel

Position: Seated Indian style with L shin in front.

Motion: Reach both arms out to the front and use abs to fold at the waist, inhale as you sit up, exhale as you reach out. Do two reps. Then climb fingers over to the knee where the shin is in front. Try to get your forehead to touch your knee while you reach out diagonally. Inhale as you sit up, exhale as you reach out. Do two reps. Switch seated Indian style so that R shin is in the front. Repeat forward and diagonal reps.

2 reps forward and 2 reps diagonally (8 total)



Double-leg kick hands-clasped

Position: Lie on stomach, hands on small of back. Head is turned to L. Abs engaged throughout motion.

Motion: Kick both legs twice. Then turn your head to center, lift the chest and legs to a superman position but your hands are clasped and lifted behind you. Lower body to mat, while turning head to the R. Repeat kicks and lift back up to superman position.

2 reps total



Double-leg kick-hands spread open

Position: Lying on stomach, hands on small of back. Head is turned to L. Abs engaged throughout motion.

Motion: Perform technique as illustrated in #14, except with spread hands open and behind you as you reach through your fingertips. Lower body to mat, while turning head to the R.

2 reps total



Rolling like a ball

Position: Sitting up in a tucked position. Both hands are pulling on the shins. Balance with abs engaged as you keep feet lifted off the floor. Toes are pointed.

Motion: Roll down onto your spine maintaining tucked position and then use abs to roll back up to starting position. Remain in the tucked position the entire time.

5 total rolls



Open-leg rocker

Position: Sitting with both legs slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Lift your legs to hold onto them at your calves. You are in V-sit position, toes pointed toward ceiling. Abdominals are engaged and you are balancing with straight spine.

Motion: Roll back as you keep your legs and arms straight in the V-sit position. Use abdominals to roll back up to starting position.

4 total "V sit rolls"

