

Flexibility to the Max

Stretch your splits in 3 weeks

Week 1:

Reserve thirty minutes a day to stretching (yes, including weekends, or else it won't work. If you absolutely cannot stretch on one day, just make sure you get straight back to your stretching routine the next day). Warming up before you stretch is very helpful because it makes your muscles warm and easy to stretch. The warmer you are, the easier the stretch will be; thus, the more success you will have in getting those splits down. And here are your daily stretching routines:

Session 1: 15 minutes

I recommend that you get this over in the morning, before you go to school, work, or whatever you do during the daytime. After warming up, start your stretches. I recommend that you stretch one minute (at the very least) for each stretch. Remember: the splits are not dependent on one muscle. Helpful stretches are listed and described at the end of this post.

Session 2: 15 minutes

This one I'd say to do before you sleep. Do not slack off because you're sleepy or tired. Brush your teeth, stretch, then sleep. If you absolutely cannot do session 1 in the morning and session 2 at night, then leave at least 2 hours in between sessions. You need to gain flexibility, have some time off, then work back on the flexibility to regain it and improve it.

Week 2:

Keep up with the same thing as week one, but now stretching time is increased to 45 minutes a day. That means there is now a session in between—session 1.5 should be done after school, work, etc. And if not, leave 2 hours in between sessions. You should really start noticing that you're getting close to the splits.

Week 3:

Increase your stretching time to one hour. This is same as week two, with another session. This is the between dinner and before bedtime one. The free time that you have after dinner and before your last session should be used for an additional 15 minutes of stretching. After the end of this week, you should be in your splits! Yipee! If you're having problems or not noticing any improvement, try other stretches. Again, a variety of stretches is your best bet. Remember to sit in the splits, or as close as you can go (I know it hurts, but how else can you get it?).

Tip: Stretch when you're doing an inactive activity, like the laundry, reading a book, watching TV, or talking on the phone. This should be apart from your sessions, which require 100% focus. Extra stretching is always beneficial!

Precaution: It's NOT a good thing to be feeling pain when you stretch. Pain is different from soreness. The two concepts are a bit hard to explain in writing. In general, if your legs feel painful when you stretch, it's a good idea to ease back a little bit. If you find that you are still having problems with this, the best bet is to consult a coach or doctor since they know best. Many readers have questioned whether or not they are physically capable of doing the splits because they feel that they are making little progress; I will refer you to this splits misconceptions article for that purpose.

Some Helpful Stretches:

V-sit: sit with your back flat against a wall. Bring both legs as far back to the wall as you can and keep proper posture and straight legs. While keeping your posture, bring your back down towards the floor as your arms reach out in front of you (not down) as far as possible. Feel the stretch. Do this first pointing your toes, then flexing your feet. Try moving your legs out further as you go on. Also, you can reach out towards your right and left legs. Remember to breathe!

Straight leg stretch: Basically, keep your legs straight and feet together. Stand, and without bending your knees, reach down as far as possible. Put your weight on your toes (not your heels)—this feels a bit unnatural at first, but it is the proper way to stretch. You can also do this one sitting. Sit with proper posture, legs straight out in front of you and ankles together. Reach out with your arms. Do this both flexing and pointing your toes.

Sideways stretch: Ok, so you've probably figured out that I'm making up names for the stretches as I go along. Pretty creative, eh? Anyway, the "sideways stretch" goes like this. Stand in the straight leg stretch position. Now bring your right leg out in front of you (like you're taking a step forward) about two feet. This doesn't have to be precise, just as long as you're close. Stand up, keep your posture back. Now reach down to your right foot, keeping your posture back and your hips in line. Your hips shouldn't shift to aid you in your stretch. Go down slowly, and if your hips shift, come back up and try again. Go as far down as you can without shifting hips. After doing this for a minute, bend your left leg and continue stretching to your right. Now switch legs.

4 Stretch: Named because it looks like a number 4. Sit down on your butt and put both legs straight out in front of you. Bend your left leg so that your left knee is on the ground, your left foot also on the ground with the flat side touching your right knee, and your right knee is straight with toes pointed. See the 4 that your legs make? Stretch, with proper posture, to your right leg. Reach out with your arms, as far as you can. After a minute, remembering to breathe, of course, flex your right foot and continue reaching out for another minute. Switch legs, and repeat.

Standing V-leg stretch: Stand up, posture back, with your legs shoulder width apart. You can go a little wider if that's more comfortable for you, but try to keep it as close to shoulder width as possible. Bring your straight arms between and beyond your legs—reach back. Also reach to your right and left legs. Reach down the center, too. As with the straight leg stretch, keep your weight over your toes rather than your heels.

Half squat: Squat. Keep your right leg where it is and place your left leg straight out your left side, toes pointed, as if you were doing the center splits with your left leg. Put your right hand on the ground to the left of your right foot. Use your right elbow to push your right knee out. You should feel stretching your inner thighs. Switch sides.

The frog: Lie on your stomach, and bring your feet together, with your pelvis on the ground, sort of like the butterfly in reverse, and the goal is to get your feet to touch the ground, still together, and your knees bent, and your pelvis on the ground. After you achieve that bring your feet closer to your body and do the same thing over again, until you can have your knees bent, feet and pelvis on the ground, and your feet right against your body. It helps dancers with their turn out too

The splits: Well, if you want your splits down, shouldn't you be doing them? . Never be discouraged by how far you are from the splits. Just get as close as you can and hold it there for awhile (a minute). Relax, and repeat a few times. You can also do the splits on the wall (preferably, a doorway, so you can keep your balance). In a few days, after doing multiple stretches, you will notice that you're getting closer. Rejoice!

All of these stretches usually take about a minute. Above, I've given you much more than fifteen minutes of stretching, so spread these stretches out. Do some in one session, others in another session, but try to stretch as many muscles as you can each session. Don't confine yourself to just one stretch. Do both splits in each session at least once (preferably at the end, to see your improvement).

Another thing to remember is to stretch both legs. A lot of people stretch one leg, while the other leg is completely inflexible. This leads to uneven kicks. It's a good idea to get both legs flexible so you aren't stuck with being good with one split and not the other. You never know what split you will encounter in the future!