FLEXIBILITY AND STRETCH SPECIALISED WORKOUT

Flexibility is something that is very easy to lose if you do not focus on keeping it. Most people who train for a number of years are going to experience some reduction in their flexibility. Only if you have outstanding flexibility to begin with and then take careful steps to maintain it will you be able to avoid losing it to a degree. Joints are indirectly encased in muscle anyway, so when the density of that muscle is increased, the mobility of joints can be reduced. This is not even taking into account that joints get wear and tear from just being used for these movements, and that is direct damage from the training. This is never more obvious when looking at shoulders post a few years of training, your internal rotation movement will be reduced at least some. The point of this workout is to help those who want to avoid regression of flexibility and for those people who are starting from a novice place and just want to improve flexibility after a while of not doing so. This workout is perfect for both groups, especially as everyone should have a warmup routine for the gym. Not having a warmup routine will cause damage to your body, working out is fun but you need to be safe. This workout is also intended to be used by all ages, with potentially more focus on older people just because that demographic is most likely to need flexibility training.

Each exercise is a two-part process of a stretch and then some resistance work.

HOLD ALL STRETCHES FOR 20-30 SECONDS

For this workout you will need:

* **Dumbbells**. Click here for the best dumbbells of 2021 or click here to jump to my favourite one.

Other useful pieces of equipment:

* **Yoga Mat** for a comfortable place to exercise.

and

* **Barbell** to add variety to the workout.

If you do not have any of the equipment check out my Awesome no equipment workout plan

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4 DAY SPLIT (e.g., Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday)

The workout will go as follows:

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| Day 1 – LOWER BODY + STRETCH | Quadriceps, Glutes, Hamstrings, Calves, Lower Back |
| Day 2 – UPPER BODY + STRETCH | Pectorals, Front Delts, Triceps, Upper Back, Biceps |
| Day 3 - STRETCH | Quadriceps, Glutes, Hamstrings, Calves, Lower Back, Pectorals, Delts, Triceps, Biceps |
| Day 4 – LOWER BODY + STRETCH | Quadriceps, Glutes, Hamstrings, Calves, Lower Back |

DAY 1 – LOWER BODY AND STRETCHES

Lower Back Stretch & Inverted Row 4x10

For the stretch component of the exercise, lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Put your hands on the back of your thighs and pull your legs towards your chest. Do not go past the point of the stretch. On to the movement component of the exercise, we are going with Inverted Row. This exercise is inspired by the dumbbell row, rows are the most effective back exercise after deadlifts. Extend both arms out in front but twist your wrists around so it is an underhand grip, like a bicep curl, pull the weight up towards you. You should be lying prone on a bench or raised surface to make this as simple as possible.

Pro Tip: Try and find something raised for the best support. If not, place a knee and an arm on something and perform the movement one arm at a time. A bench allows for both sides of your back to be worked at the same time.

If you want to try and make this exercise more difficult and more dynamic by starting in the normal dumbbell row grip position and whilst pulling towards you, rotate your wrists so you finish in the inverted grip position. In the negative half of the movement, rotate your wrists back.

Quadricep Stretch & Dumbbell Squats 4x10

For the stretch aspect, kneel down and separate your feet enough so you can sit between them. Put your hands behind your body on the floor and lean backwards as far as possible, try, and feel the stretch. The exercise component of this is the dumbbell squat. Squats are the best for introducing stability if you are a novice or expert alike. If you are a novice, do the squats with no weights. You stand up with feet shoulder-width apart and squat down until you are parallel with the ground.

Pro Tip: Do not try to go further than parallel with the ground, as this risks injury because your body probably is not that flexible. You will get stuck in the bottom of the movement if you go too low.

In order to make this exercise harder for yourself, you can turn it into a box squat. This requires a box, or an object that is flat and roughly the same height off the ground as you would be when you hit parallel on your squat. You would squat down same as previously, just this time onto the box.

Glute & Hamstring Stretch & Prone Leg Raise 4x10

For the stretch aspect, lie down on the ground with your legs extended. Keep one leg bent and slide the heel gently towards your bottom. Clutch your ankle with one hand and your knee with the other hand. Pull your foot to the opposite shoulder. The exercise element for this is the prone leg raise. This is perfect for increasing flexibility as it comes straight from the yoga playbook. You lie face down on a mat or the floor and raise your legs in an alternating fashion behind you. Move upwards and outwards with your kickbacks. This is mostly glute activating, but some is hamstrings.

Pro Tip: Make sure to raise your hips off the floor a tiny bit if you feel too much pressure on your lower back. Lower back spasms are to be avoided if possible as they put you out for a few weeks, nothing can be trained sufficiently if you are suffering from back spasms.

If you want to make this exercise tougher, you will want to adopt a position on all fours in a crawl position, you will then extend your leg backwards from this position the same as previously.

Calf Stretch & Calf Raises 4x10

For the stretch component, stand next to something to lean on, i.e., a bannister, then get a peak contraction on your calf raise. Slowly lower yourself down releasing the contraction. This is very similar to the working exercise part of this combination. You have to find something to lean on, then push up with your calves onto your tiptoes, then slowly descend and repeat. Being the often-skipped part of legs, calf-training is surprisingly crucial to developing a strong foundation for overall leg progress.

Pro Tip: Full extension on this movement is essential, a half-rep will not work your calf muscles sufficiently. Make sure you finish each rep on your tiptoes.

To make this harder, do it with one leg at a time. For this you will need something to lean on and help with your balance unless you are an acrobat. Then push off with one leg whilst holding the other off the ground.

DAY 2 – UPPER BODY & STRETCHES

Pectoral Stretch & Dumbbell Bench Press 4x10

For the stretch aspect of this combination, take your dumbbells with a little weight on them. Lie flat on a bench or raised surface, then lower the dumbbell out to the side and hold at max contraction for a few seconds. Moving on the resistance part of the exercise, barbell bench press is one of my favourite chest exercises, but dumbbell bench press is better for isolation and stretch. You lie with a flat back on a raised surface, extend both dumbbells upwards in the double overhand grip, then lower the weight towards your chest and push back up to starting position.

Pro Tip: Do not bend your wrists on these movements, once you damage your wrists there is no going back. Rounding your wrists on difficult press movements is a common error, make sure you are not falling for it.

To make this movement harder, you can finish sets with close grip dumbbell bench press. You will want to press the dumbbells together and lower them right down to your chest, whilst keeping the dumbbells pressed together, perform five extra reps after your set is complete. This targets a different part of the chest.

Shoulder Stretch & Dumbbell Shoulder Press 4x10

Find a broom/bar/rope/band and hold it in both hands. You then move it up and over your head and behind you to the end of your range of movement. Do this back and forth until your shoulders are warm. For the exercise part, you want to position with a dumbbell in each hand whilst you are seated. Your hands should be above your shoulders, push upwards and squeeze. It is important to balance your shoulder training, so you do not end up with strength imbalances.

Pro Tip: This is more of a repetition based exercise, you want to keep the rep length shorter and move straight into the next rep as smoothly as possible. This takes pressure off the joint.

If you want to make this exercise harder, you can turn it into Arnolds. This is the same setup as DB shoulder press, but as you perform the rep, you must twist your wrists, so the weight is facing you at the top of the movement and then twist back to start as you end your rep.

Upper Back Stretch & Dumbbell Row 4x10

For the second back stretch of the workout, kneel down on the ground in an all-fours position. Make sure to curl your back upward towards the ceiling. Hold this stretch and then return to normal by pushing your stomach towards the ground. The resistance component of this will be the dumbbell row. This is similar to the inverted row we did on lower body day, lean to one side on a bench or raised surface. Extend one arm out below you and pull the weight up until it is tucked under your body and squeeze.

Pro Tip: Hold the weights at the peak of the contraction for a couple of seconds before releasing. This will help teach you mind-muscle control for your back muscles, which are some of the hardest to develop that level of control with.

If you wish to make this harder, short of changing the grip to inverted, only increasing the weight/resistance is effective at making this harder.

Triceps Stretch & Triceps Extension 4x10

For the stretch aspect, put your hand on your shoulder, or just behind your neck whilst holding a weight. Lower the weight behind you to about 90 degrees, then stop and return to normal. This will serve as the stretch, make sure to only do it with minimum weight and only a few times. The exercise portion of this is very similar. The method is the same, just the weight should be working weight and the rep range will be larger. Triceps are used in a large number of compound exercises, so having strong arms is very useful for strength athletes.

Pro Tip: Make sure to support your elbow with your free arm, this removes pressure from your shoulder joint which will start to hurt if the weight is too heavy for your relative strength.

To make this exercise harder, you can make one dumbbell of the most weight you have and use both hands to lower it behind your head. It is the same movement, and it works the same part of the triceps, just the difference is this is a compound exercise.

Biceps Stretch & Bicep Curl 4x10

For the stretch aspect, you want to start with two dumbbells in a finished curl position. They are to be lowered in the negative plane of movement until they reach 90 degrees. Hold the stretch here and then repeat once more. This is the reverse of the curl movement that makes up the resistance part of this exercise. Keep your arms by your sides, hold the dumbbells in both hands. Turn your wrists outwards slightly, then curl the weights up towards you. Mind that you may want to stop at 90 degrees, depending on your insertions.

Pro Tip: If your wrists hurt doing this exercise with an open grip, you can substitute it for hammer curls which put a lot less strain on your wrists.

If you want to make this exercise more difficult, then turn it into Zottman curls. Rotate your wrists inwards as you perform the rep, and then outwards as you lower the negative. This will incorporate a lot more forearms into the movement.

DAY 3 – STRETCHES

All these stretches are the same as in the exercise descriptions, but I have compiled them here for ease.

Lower Back

For the stretch component of the exercise, lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Put your hands on the back of your thighs and pull your legs towards your chest. Do not go past the point of the stretch.

Quadriceps

For the stretch aspect, kneel down and separate your feet enough so you can sit between them. Put your hands behind your body on the floor and lean backwards as far as possible, try, and feel the stretch.

Hamstrings/Glutes

For the stretch aspect, lie down on the ground with your legs extended. Keep one leg bent and slide the heel gently towards your bottom. Clutch your ankle with one hand and your knee with the other hand. Pull your foot to the opposite shoulder.

Calves

For the stretch component, stand next to something to lean on, i.e., a bannister, then get a peak contraction on your calf raise. Slowly lower yourself down releasing the contraction.

Chest

For the stretch aspect of this combination, take your dumbbells with a little weight on them. Lie flat on a bench or raised surface, then lower the dumbbell out to the side and hold at max contraction for a few seconds.

Shoulders

Find a broom/bar/rope/band and hold it in both hands. You then move it up and over your head and behind you to the end of your range of movement. Do this back and forth until your shoulders are warm.

Upper Back

For the second back stretch of the workout, kneel down on the ground in an all-fours position. Make sure to curl your back upward towards the ceiling. Hold this stretch and then return to normal by pushing your stomach towards the ground.

Biceps

For the stretch aspect, you want to start with two dumbbells in a finished curl position. They are to be lowered in the negative plane of movement until they reach 90 degrees. Hold the stretch here and then repeat once more.

Triceps

For the stretch aspect, put your hand on your shoulder, or just behind your neck whilst holding a weight. Lower the weight behind you to about 90 degrees, then stop and return to normal. This will serve as the stretch, make sure to only do it with minimum weight and only a few times.

DAY 4 – LOWER BODY & STRETCHES

This workout day is the same as DAY 1 of the same title, so please refer to those exercise descriptions for your information.