WARM-UP ROUTINE

The warm-up, for most lifters, is the worst part of the workout. Just because it is boring, it is not pushing for a new max and you are not getting a sleeve-splitting pump. There is no adrenalin in a warm-up, it is, however, essential to long-term health and fitness. Also, yes, you are welcome to dislike me for saying that. The upper part of the warm-up is to target frequently-used JOINTS, and not muscle groups per se. To warm-up the muscle group before a set, do a light set (considerably less than working weight) of more reps than usual.

I can only use myself as an example, but I started heavy-lifting around the age of 16 (I am now 24), and I can already feel issues that stem from poor or no warming up as a youngster. The damage was done for me in the first 2 to 3 years of lifting. I did heavy squats before I had learned my mind-muscle connection properly and before I had perfected my technique (also important), so the movement was less methodical and more grunt effort. This resulted in a lot of wearing of the joints on the left side of my body (my non-dominant side). My left hip cracks every day, usually multiple times, it seizes up sometimes when I am walking and can only be fixed by cracking it back into place. Both my knees crack, but my left is worse because of some wear on the left lateral collateral ligament which has resulted in tightness regularly. Now, these are minor injuries that occasionally tweak when it is cold, or I have not warmed up properly and try to put too much force through them. I can exist normally, just my joints crack. I still lift 5x a week easily and am every bit as obsessed as I was 8 years ago when I started, I love the gym and I love fitness and I will never give it up, I just want people to learn from my mistakes.

I have an extended warm up for whenever I work out now, my shoulders take a large amount of the focus for upper body days and for lower days, obviously the main focus for the warmup is legs. The main focus of the Upper Body Warmup is to prepare the joints for the intensity of the session that is going to come up, if you are going to have a very intense session, you should warmup for longer than if you are keeping the intensity to a minimum. Most of the Upper Body Stretches are to target the rotator cuff. Your rotator cuff is a collection of tendons and muscles that encompass your shoulder joint. If these tendons/muscles get injured, this is a rotator cuff injury, and it will severely hinder your ability to work out effectively. Shoulder injuries become more common after the age of 40, especially rotator cuff injuries.

For this warmup you will need:

* **Bands.** Elasticated bands ideally, click here to find the most popular bands of 2021.

and

* **Yoga Mat.** A more comfortable place to do the warmup exercises. You could always put a blanket/camping mat down if you do not have a Yoga Mat.

FULL WARMUP

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| --- | --- |
| UPPER BODY | Rotator Cuffs, Front/Side/Rear Delts |
| LOWER BODY | Hip Flexors, Quadriceps, Hamstrings, Calves, Groin, Ankle Ligaments, Lower Back |

UPPER BODY WARMUP

* External Rotations - 1x15 Reps
* Raised External Rotations - 1x15 Reps
* Scapular Wall Slides - 3x5 Reps
* Band-Straightening Stretch - 1x20 Reps
* Bar/Band Overhead Stretch – 1x10 Reps

LOWER BODY WARMUP

* Marching (Knees Up) – 2x30 Seconds
* Side-to-Side Twists – 2x30 Seconds
* Back Kicks - 2x30 Seconds
* Ankle Grip Stretch – 1x5 Reps
* Front Leg Kick-Outs – 2x30 Seconds

UPPER BODY WARMUP

**External Rotations 1x15**

First, give your arms a shake and just loosen your upper body by wobbling about within reason, this just loosens the joints and muscles fractionally before the warmup starts. This movement is external rotations, the best rep ranges or warmups are usually conservative in nature because all you want to do is get a bit of blood into the muscle and warm up the joints and that is it. An external rotation is where your arms are by your side facing forwards, you move your arm outwards to the side in the same plane of movement, as far as you can whilst trying to hit 90 degrees. Make sure you stop when you feel tension, the point is to get warm, not injure yourself. The shoulders are so temperamental, it is strongly recommended that you warm them up before every Upper Body workout, even if you are not training them that day.

**Raised External Rotations 1x15**

These are the same as before in terms of movement, we just change the plane of movement to another direction. For this version, your arms need to be out to your sides parallel to your shoulders, with your elbows at a right angle facing forwards. You then move your arms upwards towards your head till it looks like you are in a surrender position. Stop when you feel more than a little tension, it is a stretch, we do not want injuries!

**Scapular Wall Slides 3x5 Reps**

These stretch the shoulder, and of all the exercises for shoulder warmups, I notice the biggest effect with this exercise. It feels like this stretch compacts the joint and it seems to tighten and almost remove grinding during the proceeding workout. These should be done when flat against a wall, facing forwards and having your arms in a 90 degree shape facing upwards (the surrender position). You should proceed to slide your arms up the wall until you are pointing upwards, and then back to the 90 degree position. This is to target your rotator cuff, which is the worst part of the shoulder to injure. Most lifters will aggravate their rotator cuffs at some point in their fitness journey, they are very delicate.

**Band-Straightening Stretch 1x20 Reps**

This exercise is to target the rear delts, which help you pull anything towards your face and are the second most temperamental part of your shoulder after the rotator cuff. Hold a band out in front of you at 90 degrees, arms shoulder-width apart. Pull both arms in opposite directions out to the side to stretch to your full arm span. This should pull on the rear delts on each side, again make sure you stop with tension.

**Bar/Band Overhead Stretch 1x10 Reps**

Hold a bar or band out at 90 degrees in front of you, arms shoulder-width apart. So, the same starting position as the previous exercise. Then lift over your head and try to go all the way behind you, as far as is comfortable. This is to push and improve the flexibility of the joint and to maximise flexibility for the upcoming workout. Again, with this stretch, it is so important that you do not overextend or push too far past your natural flexibility.

LOWER BODY WARMUP

**Marching (Knees Up) 2x30 Seconds**

Marching. Self-explanatory. You march on the spot, and your knees should be hitting 90 degrees at the top of the march. The marching here consists of the dynamic movement, for some of the lower body stretches, we have paired them with a static stretch to aid in the warmup. This static stretch is more like a march, but at the top of the march movement, move your leg out and to the side, repeat this for 10 to 15 times a leg. Both legs. This is to focus on your hip flexor area, which can hold a lot of tightness for active people.

**Side-to-Side Twists 2x30 Seconds**

This movement is for your hips and hip flexors like the last one, but this crucially also stretches the lower back. The lower back stretch is why this is included, as the lower back is worked intensely in any compound lift and therefore it needs loosening before the workout. For this exercise you stand still and put your arms out to the sides, then twist from side-to-side for about 30 seconds, do this twice. Almost everyone over the age of 40 has some kind of back issue, so always warm up!

**Back Kicks 2x30 Seconds**

You raise your leg up behind you and attempt to kick your backside. This is a quadriceps stretch, it also stretches your tendons, so be careful and do not over-extend (I should just write this in bold at the top). The perfect combo is to do lunges as the complimentary stretch, after the back kicks have been completed, this is another quadricep stretch so we are really trying to make sure we leave no stone unturned un this warmup.

**Ankle Grip Stretch 1x5 Reps**

Bend over forwards and try and keep your legs straight-ish. Hold your ankles firmly and keep that position for a few seconds. I say this for every single exercise but make sure you do not overstretch! Stay within your natural range of motion, as that is very important for keeping the stretch effective. The static stretch component of this stretch is very good for flexing your ankle ligaments before the workout. The ankle stretch is as follows; Put your feet together, then raise the right foot off the floor leaving only the heel touching. Then bend the knee of the left (remaining) leg so you can lean on it and then try pull your right foot upwards whilst keeping your heel on the floor. Repeat with the left.

**Front Leg Kick-Outs 2x30 Seconds**

This one is just as it sounds, kick the leg forwards as straight as it will go. Do this for 30 seconds, whilst trying to keep the movement reasonably smooth. This is a hamstring/glute stretch, therefore coming full-circle on the leg muscle groups. This can be perfectly combined with a static hamstring stretch, go down onto both knees, put one leg out in front of you, then lean on that leg gently, this should stretch your hamstring/glute. You can pull on your toe if you wish but this is not essential.