



5 DAILY STRETCHES FOR RUNNERS



Welcome Runner!

Thanks for subscribing to my email list! As promised, here is your freebie: 5 stretches I do every day as a yoga teacher and runner of 25+ years.

I have always been pretty flexible for a runner. I dabbled in yoga early in my running career and became a more regular attendee of classes once I turned 30. I've always been able to do the splits and in my early 30s, I started taking recreational circus classes while also still running. I try to stay flexible for circus and mobile for running and yoga plays a role in this.

I do these daily and they have helped me immensely. I have been fortunate to never have a major running injury, but I've had my share of sore and tight muscles from overuse and the repetitive nature of the sport that have made me take short breaks from running due to pain. I came back from these breaks with help from my physiotherapist and a daily yoga and stretching routine that keeps me feeling mobile and improves my flexibility. And, I'm getting faster due to moving more efficiently and comfortably.

Committing to stretching daily might seem daunting, but I make it fun and something to look forward to since I do them pretty soon after I wake up. I am a big fan of habit stacking, so I make my first cup of coffee and do these while I'm listening to a Portuguese lesson (I'm learning to speak it). But, you could easily listen to an audiobook, a podcast, or simply turn on some music, make a coffee or tea or morning hot beverage, and make this series part of a soothing way to start your day.

This sequence of poses does not take long, only about 15-20 minutes total. You could also add in some foam rolling if that is already a regular or semi-regular part of your recovery routine. Or you can start to add that in as you feel comfortable to lengthen your recovery routine. You can do these any time of day. I prefer then in the morning but you could do them before bed or after a workout as part of a stretching routine. If you can find that much time 5-7 days a week, you'll be feeling more mobile on your runs, preventing injury by stretching daily, and improving your flexibility. All of which will lead to better performance and more comfort for you.

While you won't be doing the splits in 6 weeks or anything- unless you're already quite close, your quads, hamstrings, hips, IT band, and lower back will be feeling a lot more relaxed and less tight. The best thing about these stretches is that you don't need any yoga props and you can do them in your home with a yoga mat or blankets or any soft surface under your knees.

Stretch 1

Crescent lunge

If you have a mat or blanket, you might want it under your knee. For low lunge, step your feet apart and lower down to the floor so that you can have a 90 degree angle with your front leg. Your front foot should be flat and grounded. Your back foot, for low lunge, should be knee and toenails down on the mat and moving stretched out behind you so that you feel a stretch in your hip flexor on that leg. You can rest your hands by your side, let them rest on your quads or hips for balance, or reach them up overhead (biceps by ears or something close to

that) and gently arch back. A tiny arch in this pose can feel like a big lunge for most of us runners with tight lower backs. So, even though it isn't super comfortable, it is a good idea to do the arch back every so often when you hold this pose. Make sure you do each side and hold for 1 to 1.5 minutes on each side.



Stretch 2

IT Band Stretch

Take a seat on your floor or mat with your legs stretched in front of you. When you first start doing this pose, you'll want to have a belt, strap, rope or anything you can hold your foot with, if you can't grab your foot with your hand and keep your leg straight. Starting with your left leg, loop your prop around it and hold your prop with your right hand OR grab the outside of your left foot with your right hand, lift it up, and gently cross it over your right leg. IT isn't a big cross over. Then, turn slightly to the left. You want your leg to be straight, no bend at the knee. You should feel this down the side of your leg, mostly at the upper part of your leg. It will stretch your IT Band, which isn't a muscle but can be quite tight for most runners and you do want to stretch it out. I like to call it saying hello to your IT Band. Hold this one for 1 - 1.5 minutes or work up to 2 if you can stand it. Over time, if your hamstrings might loosen up enough for you to keep your leg straight, drop the prop, and use your hand.



Stretch 3

Half split

Don't worry, we are not doing the splits here! If you have yoga blocks, sturdy pillows or stacks of books to rest your hands on, have them close for this one. You might be able to also just place your hands on the floor. Start from the floor again, on your knees, lengthen your left leg in front of you with your knee and toes facing the ceiling. You don't have to flex your foot or engage muscles but keep the toes upright. Your right leg should be behind you, knee at 90 degrees, toenails on your mat or floor. Then, you're going to hinge at the hip and fold forward until you stop and feel the stretch in your hamstring. You might want to rest your hands on your props on each side of your left leg here if the floor is not close enough. Over time, your hamstring muscles on each leg will loosen and you may or may not lose the hand props. You might also feel a stretch in your lower back. Over time, you might be able to bend forward more as well. Hold this one for 1-1.5 minutes and up to 2 if you like it (or longer) and make sure to do both sides.



Stretch 4

Couch stretch

This one can be a really intense quad stretch if you want it to be. You can use your sofa or a wall. The Sofa is more comfortable. You will want to keep your grounded knee comfortable here so if your knee is sensitive or you have hardwood or tile floors, get a folded up mat, a blanket, or a pillow to cushion your knee. Back your leg up fairly close to the couch, not all the way, you'll adjust once you settle in and find out your limit. Your knee should be down and foot up. Your front leg is in a lunge position and you're positioning yourself so that you have a pretty straight line from your back knee to your hip bone. You don't want to sit back through and hinge at the hip. Think about that crescent lunge again. If you don't feel the stretch in your quad, back your knee up closer to the base of the couch and lunge again. You can rest your hands by your sides or lean forward and take them to props or the floor, just remember to keep that nice straight line from knee through hip. Hold for 2 minutes on each side.



Stretch 5

Child's pose

REST TIME! This classic yoga pose is a resting pose that stretches and promotes relaxation and restoration - two things that runners need. It lengthens your spine, opens your hips, and stretches your thighs, and has a lot of other benefits. This one can be tricky as well if your knees are sensitive in a deep bend, but I have modifications. If you have a pillow or a blanket that you can roll up to put behind your knees, you can lessen the deep bend. You're going to start on your knees or from a tabletop. Take your knees to the width of your mat, bring your toes together and sit back on them. Lengthen your arms forward long and parallel in front of you with your face or forehead to the mat. Once you're settled, you can try to walk your fingertips forward a little more and lengthen through the shoulders, lats, and back. Rest in this pose anywhere from 1-5 minutes. This is your resting pose so enjoy it! End your stretches with this, even if you add more to this sequence, I suggest doing this one last and maybe setting an intention for your day in this one if you're doing these in the morning.



And that's it, you're done! Add anything else, like foam rolling or mobility if you're interested. Or, add in any other gentle movement that you already do or like.