

GREEN GYM™



**Handy Field
Guide**

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Disclaimer

Nothing within this document is a medical opinion or definition nor should it be construed as such. No one should change any medication or instruction given to them by a medical professional without the express direction of their clinician.

Individuals are responsible for their own safety and for that of participants around them during activities.

What is a Green Gym™?

The Green Gym™ is the innovation of TCV and Dr William Bird, it was first offered in 1998 as an alternative or adjunct to conventional forms of the medical model and as a programme to increase habitual physical activity. It enables participants the opportunity to improve their overall wellbeing as well as their local environment by taking part in practical environmental activities. Green Gym differs from many other environmental/conservation projects, being underpinned by social action theory and having a strong health evidence base.

Most people do not engage with conventional gyms or sports, and many encounter barriers to taking part in sustainable physical activity. Green Gym is effectively a health by stealth model, supporting people to improve how they feel about themselves and encouraging better health decisions.

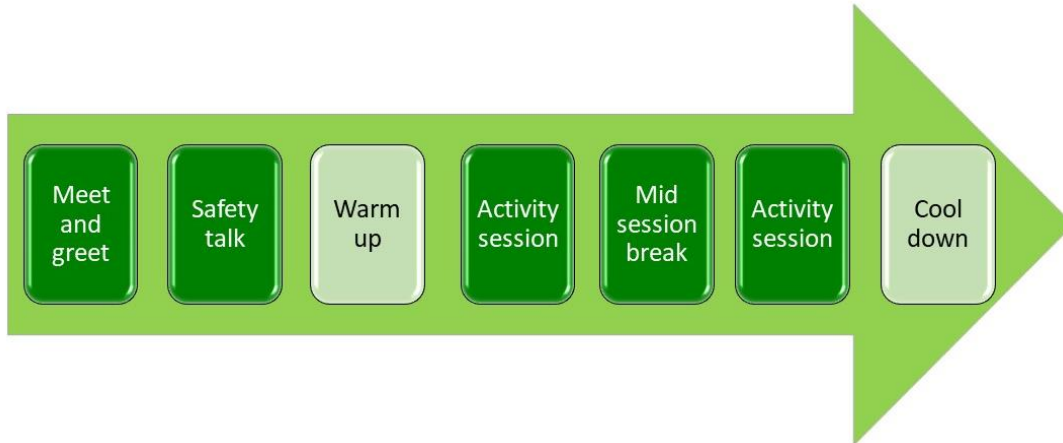
People benefit physically, mentally and socially; reducing the risk of many diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, a number of cancers and a range of mental health benefits, while improving their social connectedness.

Green Gyms run throughout Scotland, England and Northern Ireland in both rural and urban areas.

Most Green Gyms are developed in conjunction with an agency whose aim is to improve the health and wellbeing or social connectedness of individuals, but not always. The main aim of any new Green Gym is for it to ultimately become a self-sustaining Community Green Gym.

This field guide seeks to provide advice and support to anyone leading a Green Gym, whether they are being delivered directly by TCV staff, as a self-sustaining Community Green Gym group, or by a staffed organisation which has signed a Green Gym Licence Agreement.

Green Gym session flow



All Green Gyms follow the pathway shown above. This is important as it is constructed to engage social action theory, maximising health and wellbeing outcomes.

The **meet and greet** engages participants as soon as they arrive, presenting a welcoming, safe place, establishing a team ethos.

The **safety talk** discusses all activities and tools, remembering any participants will be entirely new to this environment.

The **warm up** is progressive levels of work. Encourage participants to start light and increase physical activity. You can carry out a simple guided warm up if your group are keen, but this is optional.

The first **activity session** lasts about one hour, activities ranging from very low to moderate and high intensity should be offered.

Mid-session break is a time to re-energise with food and refreshments but also (importantly) to reinforce group cohesion – leaders should try to engage everyone in discussion and planning.

The second **activity session** develops from the first, participants are invited to increase or decrease intensity, as necessary.

The **cool down** is a chance to check in with participants at the end of the sessions, see how they feel and to slowly finish tasks. It is also a chance to come together at the end and thank volunteers for their work and reiterate what they have achieved. A guided cool down with stretching can be carried out if the group are keen.



Social action theory

Social action theory recognises that we are pack animals, where identifiable changes to blood chemistry occur due to proximity to others we are engaged with. Moreover, where we believe that others place value against our work we feel more positive emotions; this is heightened further where we believe others in our wider community place value against our work.

This is important as it increases the likelihood of participants feeling engaged with the group at an earlier stage and subsequently returning. This in turn is important, as we know from years of international research that people do not necessarily engage in something just because it is good for them. The health benefits may be a welcome addition but our own research shows this is rarely high on a participants own initial agenda. We sometimes refer to this “unexpected” health outcome as *health by stealth*.



Evaluation

TCV has invested significant time, money and resource to ensuring Green Gym is well respected within the green/outdoor health environment, together with the wider community, through the collection and collation of data.

Green Gym is registered at Level 2 on Nesta/TSIP standards of evidence, has a demonstrable social return on investment of £4:02 to £1:00 invested and won the Three Year Health and Wellbeing Award from the Royal Society for Public Health in 2015.

It is important that data (information about the outcomes of Green Gym) is collected safely and effectively. This will:

- maximise the potential for future funding
- ensure the outcomes match the desired effect
- ensure the best programming for participants
- identify any challenges
- add to the national Green Gym data set
- support progress towards Level 3 evidence

To ensure you have the latest processes in place for evaluation and data security, and/or to find support with this please send an email to greengym@tcv.org.uk

Green Gym Volunteers

Green Gym should never be seen as a ‘haven of the sick’ and, just like a ‘normal gym’; leaders should expect to attract a wide section of society, the majority of whom will be perfectly healthy or with minor health issues. Green Gym is inclusive by nature and available to anyone, not only those from specific target groups.

Importantly, a leader is not expected to be an expert in health matters. The leader can help to identify potential barriers that a person’s health issues may raise and ensure that they can work alongside that person to improve, rather

than exacerbate, any conditions. The responsibility for a participant's health lies firmly with that participant and their clinician, a project leader must not advise or administer any health support over and above recognised First Aid procedures.

Support from the central team is available should additional information on health issues be needed at greengym@tcv.org.uk

Specific Audiences/Target Groups

Green Gym may focus on a particular audience such as people with learning disabilities, prevention of conditions associated with isolation, patients recovering from certain conditions or school children. This generally means working in partnership with a particular organisation and it is important that the leader remembers that their prime responsibility is to supervise the task and not to look after the participant.

If the partner organisation does not provide sufficient carer support or responsible supervising adults, then it may be necessary for the leader to stop the session. This should only occur where they feel unable to adequately supervise individual members of the group where additional needs are identified.

Preventing Illness & Injury

Health Professionals may use a tool called the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) which you can use on your project or TCV have been using the below “are you ready questions”.

Please read the below questions carefully and consider each one. Being more active is beneficial and safe for most people, but your own common sense is almost certainly your best guide. If you could answer “Yes” to one or more of these questions, you should check with your doctor before joining if you haven’t already.

Please let your project leader know if there is any change to your health in the future that could affect you.

- **HEART:** Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
- **CHEST:** Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity? In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
- **BALANCE/CONSCIOUSNESS:** Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?
- **BONES:** Do you have a bone or joint problem (for example, back, knee or hip) that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
- **MEDICATION:** Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs for your blood pressure or heart condition?
- **OTHER:** Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?

A ‘Yes’ answer indicates that the recipient has a health problem, which could affect their involvement in physical activity. A ‘No’ answer indicates good health.

When welcoming a volunteer, it will be necessary to discuss any and all ‘yes’ answers with the participant before allowing them to carry out any activities. **Do not give advice on health and make it clear that the Green Gym™ supervisor is not a registered health worker.**

Ask the participant about their health in order to find out information for First Aid purposes and tell them about the tasks available, so they can make an informed decision about their involvement. If there are any doubts about their participation, ask them to seek further medical advice and if there is concern that a participant might be at risk or put others at risk, the Green Gym Leader can ask them not to take part. It may be suggested that they observe a session first to make their own assessment however, ideally, discussions about whether the Green Gym would be suitable for a participant should be carried out **before** they’ve made the journey to site.

If someone turns up unexpectedly on site, the participant needs to complete the welfare form and read through the “are you ready questions” and discuss their answers before informing them that they take part at their own risk and that they should work at their own pace.

Any data collected must be stored in line with data protection guidelines and discuss with the participant as to who has access to their personal details and reassure them that their details will be kept confidential and in accordance with data protection laws.

There will be occasions when it won’t be suitable for participants to take part due to certain medical conditions e.g.

- Unstable angina
- Unstable unmanaged diabetes
- Blood pressure higher than 180/100
- Febrile illness
- Heart failure
- Tachycardia (HR>100 bpm)
- Blood pressure fall during exercise

There may also be some ‘stop signs’:

- **Pain or discomfort** (This will occur in the chest or upper body, particularly in the left arm)
- **Breathlessness** (This will be uncontrollable and take a long time to subside)
- **Dizziness or nausea** (This is a warning if it started whilst exercising)
- **Fainting** (Watch out for this before or immediately after activity)
- **Palpitations** (A fast or irregular heartbeat is a danger signal)

Green Gym allows participants to take part in a safe and welcoming environment, performing activities that they perceive to have lasting value. Participants should be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the session and there is no better judge of a participant's health than the participant themselves.

Ingredients of a Green Gym

The ingredients of a Green Gym session should include:

- short sessions of around 3 hours at least once a week
- a range of activities that are active, varied, interesting, stimulating and purposeful
- activities appropriate and suited to participants and catering for a wide range of abilities
- activities that benefit the health of the participant and the environment
- local sites with occasional 'away days'
- a programme that runs all year where appropriate and applicable
- follow safe working guidelines and practices, making sure all Green Gym sessions are covered by up to date insurance and First Aid provision
- at least one leader at all Green Gym activities who has completed a TCV "Essentials of Green Gym" training

Other desirable ingredients could include:

- the offer of informal or accredited learning
- the aim of becoming a self-sustaining Green Gym, work towards an agreed funding source, period of handover or agree date of project completion
- signposting to other forms of physical activity, advice and information relating to their experiences on Green Gym sessions or health e.g. nutritional advice, smoking cessation, other volunteering opportunities

Environmental Benefits of Green Gym

TCV Green Gym is not only seen as benefiting the participant, but also the local environment, in fact this is one of Green Gyms™ USPs. It is therefore important to point out the purpose of carrying out practical tasks and any informal environmental education attached to this. A few points to consider:

- Always try to plant native species
- Avoid peat-based products
- Where practicable, reduce amount of burnt material by finding alternative uses of any arising
- Ensure practical activity is part of any previously agreed management plan
- Practical work is undertaken with seasonal consideration, minimising disturbance to wildlife
- Reassess projects if the short term disturbance to wildlife outweighs long term benefits
- Review and revise projects with best environmental practice in mind
- Raise awareness of other environmental issues
- Recycle where possible and source local/fair-trade produce where applicable and appropriate
- Keeping projects and sites local could reduce the carbon footprint of the project and environmental impact it has

Preparing a Green Gym session

Site Visit:

- Ensure site visits are carried out for all sessions, to check that work is suitable and appropriate for participants and to determine site details. This will help plan what activities will be carried out during the Green Gym sessions

- Site visits are still important even if the group is familiar with the site, as it ensures the site hasn't changed and also maintains good relations with the land owner
- Discuss with the land owner potential task lists, dates and any deadlines

Confirmation of Project Work:

- Make contact with the landowner prior to starting task to confirm tasks and any materials/costs to inform either party of any changes to original plan
- Gather details of work
- Dates of sessions
- Outline of what landowner will provide e.g. materials, equipment
- What your group will provide e.g. volunteers, tools
- Health and safety responsibilities e.g. First Aid provision

Resources:

- Always a good idea to ensure your group has suitable, good quality tools available for the task
- Ensure tea kit is stocked up and functional – some would say that this was THE most important thing out on a Green Gym!
- If appropriate, ensure a vehicle is available which is suitable to carry the required passengers and for the chosen task

Running a Green Gym

Do I really want to do this?

Getting a voluntary group of any sort going requires time, energy and commitment. That said, those that have been able to commit to running a Green Gym have got a lot out of it and have often remained closely involved with the project for a number of years.

Sharing the work

It is possible to run a group on your own, but why would anyone want to? The best way to run a group is to ensure that anyone who wants to be involved has got something useful to do. Unless you have the active support of some larger body - such as a local Wildlife Trust or Council - it will most likely be a challenging and onerous task to run the group single-handed. It is also the best way of guaranteeing that when you can no longer play as active a role, for whatever reason, the group will not collapse in your absence.

Yes, it can be quite hard to let go of some responsibilities, particularly where you feel a personal ownership of the group creation, however whilst other people may not do things the same way as you would; it doesn't mean they can't do them at all or to the same standard.

Spreading the work around makes sense for everyone. Where the burden of leadership is eased, in time new people will feel confident about taking on more responsibility when long-standing members leave. If people feel more involved they are more likely to bring in new members, help raise money, turn out on rainy days and, above all, be a positive public face for your group.

For some groups, it may make sense for these people to meet as a committee, which can deal quickly with financial matters and routine business.

Getting more group members involved can also help solve problems. With each person bringing their own skills, interests and experience. Sharing the load means that you can effectively utilise other people's skills and targeting interested group members to perform a valuable role on the committee can often prove successful.

Roles for volunteers

The principle responsibilities, in most groups, are outlined below. Often, two or more of these posts are rolled into one, but it is important not to overload anyone. Keen volunteers don't need lots of skills to start with, as there is lots of training out there to help volunteers who are running community groups.

Your group may not like the idea of giving people titles, which is a traditional way of running a group, but that is a decision for you and your group to make. All these tasks have to be done by someone but it is unlikely that you will ever have a committee with twelve or more people! If you set up a structure that feels right and does the job, there is every likelihood that your group will flourish. Remember that continuity is essential and an effective structure can make sure that handing over to a new co-ordinator goes smoothly. You may not need to do all these things when you start; begin with a co-ordinator/chair, treasurer and a secretary.

Co-ordinating the group

The co-ordinator/chair role is first and foremost responsibility for your group. They need to know what everyone else is doing and to think ahead. A key role is also leadership - setting a positive example to the rest of the group, which may involve being the person who turns out at unsociable hours on wet mornings! The most important role, however, is co-ordination and leadership. This means encouraging other people who have taken on responsibility to carry out their duties and ensuring that everything is ready for project work and meetings. The co-ordinator/chair should also gauge the group's future direction. This goes well beyond making sure there will be projects to do when the current ones are finished. It is always important to be thinking: "What should the group be doing in a year's time? How do we get there? What kind of training and equipment might we need?". Last but not least, the co-ordinator should ensure that when they leave, the group and committee can continue to be successful. A good co-ordinator will already be training someone to take over.

Doing the books

The treasurer or bookkeeper is one of the most important posts in your group. If correct accounts are not maintained, you may end up with arguments over who is owed what, or worse still, not knowing how much money you have. As more groups become fully constituted, even charities, the legal and financial duties become more important. The basic task is keeping the accounts, which may also involve working with clients and fundraisers.

Fundraising

This post is sometimes confused with that of treasurer but the two are very different. A good fundraiser needs to be assertive and quite happy to ask all sorts of people and organisations for money. Enthusiasm is more important than experience, since there are plenty of online resources and training available for this work, including TCV's Grantnet facility, available to groups paying full membership to TCV's Community Network (see contacts).

Keeping membership records

To function as a group, you need to know who your volunteers are and where they are. This is a relatively routine but vital job that involves keeping membership lists up to date. As with the treasurer, a well-organised person would make the ideal candidate. This person, often called the group secretary, could also take responsibility for minute taking at meetings as well as keeping contact information up to date on any websites the group may be registered on. The TCV Community Hub is an online database open to full paying members to the Community Network and Community Green Gym and Green Gym Licence holders.

Looking after tools

As your group acquires tools, this role becomes even more important. This task includes maintenance of tools, ordering new ones and keeping a close eye on where they all are. It may be that the tools are shared among the group members for storage at home or all tools kept in one person's shed, with others having access as required. TCV can offer some training and a manual to support this job. If groups are signed up as full members of the TCV Community Network they are entitled to a 10% discount on products purchased from the TCV online shop.

Organising the Practical Work

Someone in the group should be responsible for all the practical project work. This involves planning and overseeing the work, sorting out safety and permissions, organising materials and making sure that a sufficient number of volunteers turn up to do the work. This person may be responsible for leading on the day or may simply liaise with the co-ordinator.

Organising Transport

If transportation is required to get to your site then you might want to co-ordinate car sharing or simply to transport tools to site if it's more convenient than carrying them by hand. This can be helpful to new volunteers who don't have transport of their own.

Looking after refreshments

This is a popular post in many groups and is seen as THE most important one! It involves being responsible for keeping the tea kit well stocked i.e. tea, coffee, flasks of hot water (cold water/drinks in hotter weather) and biscuits! Food is a great way of rewarding the group and building team spirit. It can also be a good way to involve people who are perhaps less able at the practical work for any length of time when they first start coming to the Green Gym.

Spreading the word

Involves recruiting volunteers and letting people know what your group is doing. This might be done by producing a newsletter, putting posters up in the local area or putting a notice board on your site. This person should work closely with your co-ordinator on publicity or perhaps with the newsletter editor, if this is a role undertaken by someone other than the publicity officer. Other duties would be to attend environmental network meetings, give talks/presentations and generally raising the profile of the group e.g. at local fun days and community events. This will let people know who you are and what you do as well as hopefully attracting new volunteers.

Organising training

This could be work for two or three people, but the main responsibility is to let people know what training is available and to organise it. The role also involves maintaining files of educational materials as well as looking after slides, posters and displays.

Enjoying yourselves

Social activities should be an integral part of your group but they won't happen on their own. This is when it would be good to have a social secretary as part of your group. Social activities such as BBQs, quiz nights, baking or cooking (maybe with the produce from a food growing project), bake-offs for some healthy group competition (and to have with your cuppa at tea break!) are all great ways to keep group morale up or give it a boost now and again.

Running a website and using email

Many groups now choose to have their own website, or a page on a local environment network's site. They can post details of upcoming project work/tasks, minutes from meetings, etc. Keen group members or volunteers may want to keep a group blog up to date including photographs or funny anecdotes from practical tasks or social days out with the group. Websites do tend to need quite a lot of work to keep them up-to-date so make sure whoever does this has both the time and the skills to manage this task. Some groups also use e-mail to send their newsletter out to members who are happy with this; it can save paper, time and the cost of stamps.

Community Network

As outlined above there are many factors involved in running a Green Gym. To help them in this task, groups belonging to TCV's Community Network can access the online "Community Hub" that includes useful information and resources covering topics such as group organisation, publicity and health and safety. Contact local-groups@tcv.org.uk for more information.

Health & Safety

Risk Assessment

For Green Gyms directly delivered by TCV, Risk Assessments would automatically be done for all sites. Community Green Gyms do not necessarily require Risk Assessments to be undertaken by law however it is always a good idea to do initial site visits and thus assess that the site and activity are suitable for your group/volunteers before any practical work starts. All those taking part in any Green Gym want to come along knowing their experience is going to be both worthwhile and safe. This will hopefully help to ensure a high retention of participants where they feel encouraged to come back after trying something new with a sense of achievement and hopefully eventually some ownership of the sites they work on and projects they are involved in.

Disclosure Checks

The safety of children and vulnerable groups is a high priority therefore their safety and wellbeing must come first. Check with Disclosure Scotland if your group requires the necessary checks to be carried out before any activities are run, regardless of whether or not the leader is a volunteer or a paid member of staff.

Working with Vulnerable Groups

The nature of TCV Green Gyms means that vulnerable people, such as those with learning disability or mental health problems, are often involved. Green Gym leaders will take indirect supervision of vulnerable people, where session leaders are responsible for running only the activity, and other adults, e.g. carers, are responsible for the individual or group. For under 18's you may want to seek permission from their guardians for them to join and ideally under 16's must be accompanied by their guardian.

First Aid Cover

Projects must not be run without adequate First Aid cover. Ensure that at least one leader on the project has an Emergency First Aid certificate, as a minimum. It is also a good idea to have lists of emergency contact details on site at all times and a fully charged mobile phone/access to public telephone in case of emergencies. Knowledge of the closest hospital with an Accident and Emergency is also a valuable thing to note down and make other group members aware of. If your group works in a particularly rural area, it may be worthwhile knowing where the nearest medical help is, whether a medical centre or GP practice, and possibly the out of hours service, depending on when your group meets up.

Insurance

In order to undertake practical sessions, a Green Gym must be covered by adequate Insurance. TCV can support groups to obtain this through the community network www.tcv.org.uk/communities/join-community-network

Guidelines for Different Activities

Research into the Green Gym has shown that each individual performs tasks differently, using different muscle groups than others. In particular, participants with joint or back problems adopt the use of different muscle groups to compensate for deficiencies. It is therefore difficult to generalise however, here are some basic guidelines for each of the tasks studied.

Lifting and Carrying

Emphasis should be given to lifting loads that are not too heavy for the individual and in stressing the importance of bending the knees on lifting.

Raking

Activities such as using a rake tend to use the large muscle groups of the legs, arms and upper body in a rhythmic fashion. Advise participants to try to avoid the twisting motion which will place strain on the abdominal muscles and back. Encourage participants to switch between raking and other tasks at least every 20 minutes.

Fencing

Much of fencing work involves heavy tools such as mells and post drivers or carrying heavy materials. The over use of heavy hand tools may lead to conditions such as tennis elbow, and should ideally only be used by participants who are sufficiently capable and, even then, for relatively brief periods of time.

Tree Felling and Sawing

The muscles of the arm and shoulder are used in this type of activity. Most individuals only perform this with their dominant arm however, once again, these tasks should not be performed for prolonged periods of time without a break.

Weeding and Planting

Whenever possible, discourage participants from bending forward in a standing position as this puts strain on the lower back. A kneeling position is recommended, preferably with some cushioned knee support or garden kneeler, although for participants who have knee joint problems this may not be the ideal task.

Straining-type Tasks

Tasks such as lifting heavy loads, pulling up brambles, or pulling wire fencing tight involve 'straining'. This type of activity can lead to a rapid increase in blood pressure which may be potentially dangerous for some individuals, in particular hypertensives. Any participant who has been identified as suffering from high blood pressure or who has heart trouble should avoid such tasks.

Green Gym Session Checklist

Green Gym leaders should:

- Identify risks to people with physical health conditions and take precautions to minimise these risks
- Identify any possible barriers for participants to be included within a Green Gym session and find appropriate solutions
- Select and deliver a range of appropriate Warm up and Cool down exercises for each session
- Understand the planning and organisation needed to manage a session for people with a range of health needs
- Understand what is meant by mental health and mental illness

Other things to consider when out on a Green Gym:

- Welcome the participants and collect their details
- Communicate the required tasks clearly, including tool safety talk and any demonstration of practical work
- Consult the team by involving them in creating a plan of action
- Share work effectively by assessing the team and allocating tasks
- Monitor progress and revise plan appropriately
- Motivate participants as required
- Be aware of different motivating factors, learning styles, leadership roles and when to use them to feedback to the group on their performance and behaviour to enable them to learn and develop
- Use assertiveness techniques to meet the needs of the group whilst respecting the needs of yourself
- Work with all participants in a professional manner
- Follow safe working practices and where applicable adopt risk assessment procedures
- Plan, supervise and finish a project to the highest practicable standard
- Liaise with any client bodies or organisations within remit to assess task progress
- Manage your own learning and that of the group and encourage any training that is available
- Ensure hygiene standards are maintained
- Present a friendly and welcoming atmosphere at all times
- Tell the public about the wide ranging activities of your group
- Knowledge of TCV Green Gym policies, procedures and action plans as stated in the Community Green Gym or Green Gym Licence Agreement

Also:

- Understand what support is available from TCV staff and when to ask, for instance, dealing with unacceptable behaviour, people with special needs or completing incident report forms
- And on returning from the task complete project report information and input onto Community Hub

Warm Up & Cool Down

The body is comprised of various tissues, organs and other structures that (ideally) work in harmony to enable activities of daily living and normal life processes.

In the context of Green Gym we are interested in ensuring that participants are sufficiently prepared for activity and that they are equally prepared to leave the sessions safely, having gained maximum benefit. We are specifically interested in not causing harm. Always tell participants to only do stretches suitable for them and to ask for an alternative if needed.

Warm up refers to physically warming the body for activity, but also enabling/facilitating change within the body (such as biochemical change) in preparation for activity.

Muscles are elastic, meaning they should return to their original length after providing force. As with any material, there is less risk of tearing or damage where muscle is warmer. Ligaments, which attach bone to bone, and tendons, which attach muscle to bone are plastic, meaning they tend to stay in a new length if overly stretched. Again, an appropriate warm up reduces risk of tearing or unwanted plastic deformation.

As participants continue to warm up there are changes to blood pressure, heart rate, the (synovial) fluid in joints, levels of blood chemistry such as adrenalin, cortisol, blood sugar etc., and a range of other changes. All of these are very important as they prepare the body for safe activity, reducing the risk of injury, enhancing awareness and making the activity more enjoyable.

The warm up could be a walk to site, starting work slowly or a guided warm up if participants are keen. The warm up should last at least five minutes, develop the group dynamics and be representative of the tasks ahead. Participants should also be directed to begin activity at a lower level increasing intensity as time moves on.

The **cool down** is a time to slow down the work that is being carried out designed, maybe a gentle walk and if participants are keen a guided stretch. Primarily it's to ensure that participants' heart rates are near normal, this is likely to be more pertinent where the work has been particularly intensive. If carrying out guided stretches participants should be led through a programme of stretches that will be protective of injury in the longer term.

Stretches should be slow and rhythmic rather than bouncing or dynamic. Stretches should be held for around 30 seconds, ensuring good balance and normal breathing throughout (it is common for people to hold their breath if concentrating on the stretch too much). The stretch should be taken to the maximum range without discomfort or pain, through the stretch participants may be able to develop the stretch a little further as muscle accommodates the initial stretch.

Choose a number of stretches that fit the work plan for the session, feel free to add additional stretches or other appropriate activities.

Allow people to adapt stretches to accommodate injuries or disabilities.

Guidance on carrying out a guided Warm Up/ Cool Down - Optional

Benefits of Warming Up

- Prepare the body for activity
- Help prevent injury
- Reduce muscle stiffness and soreness after the activity

It Should Include

- Pulse Raising Activities
- Loosening/Mobility Activities
- Stretches **but** only when warmed up with above activities.
- **Warm Up should last 5 – 10 minutes**

Benefits of Cooling Down

- Prepare the body to stop exercising
- Help prevent muscle stiffness and soreness after the activity
- Return the body to pre-activity condition

It Should Include

- Loosening up activities to steadily bring the heart rate down e.g. walking
- Development stretches to maintain and promote flexibility in the muscle groups used in the activity
- **Cool Down should last 5 – 10 minutes**

Basic Guidelines

- Pulse raising activities should be low level to start with and gradually increased as the warm up progresses
- Movements should be in relation to the environment, colder conditions will require a longer warm up
- Activities should be specific to the session about to take place
- Start the main activity as soon after the warm up as possible to ensure the benefit of the activity is not lost
- Ensure activities are set at the right level for the fitness, age, ability and experience of your group

Consider Your Group

Fitness Levels

Consider the fitness level of your group. There will probably be a range of fitness levels so be sure to adapt the intensity of your warm up for those who are new to activity.

Age

Children and young people warm up and cool down more quickly than adults.

Experience

Take time to explain and demonstrate each of the exercises. This is particularly appropriate if your group has limited or no experience of the activities you are about to ask them to undertake.

Examples of Warm Up Activities

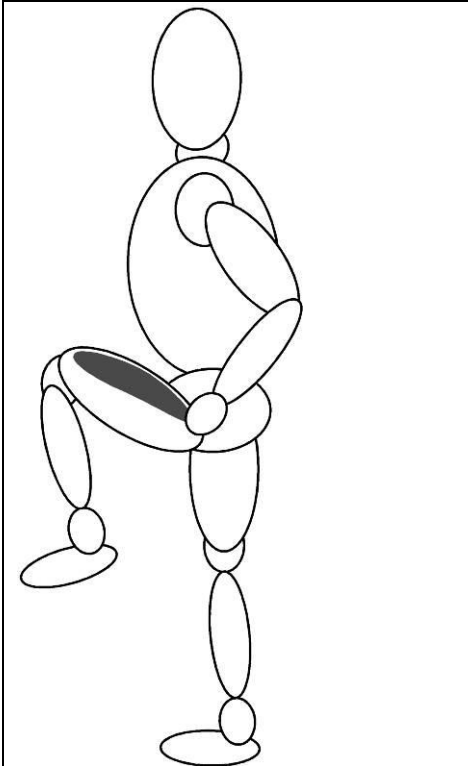
Shoulder Shrugs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up straight with good posture – “think tall”. • Arms are by your side with feet shoulder width apart. • Soften the knees and pull abdominals in. • Lift the shoulders up towards the ears and lower them down again. • Shrugs can be done individually or both shoulders together. • Keep the head still, looking straight ahead • Make it a smooth controlled movement
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Arm Circles

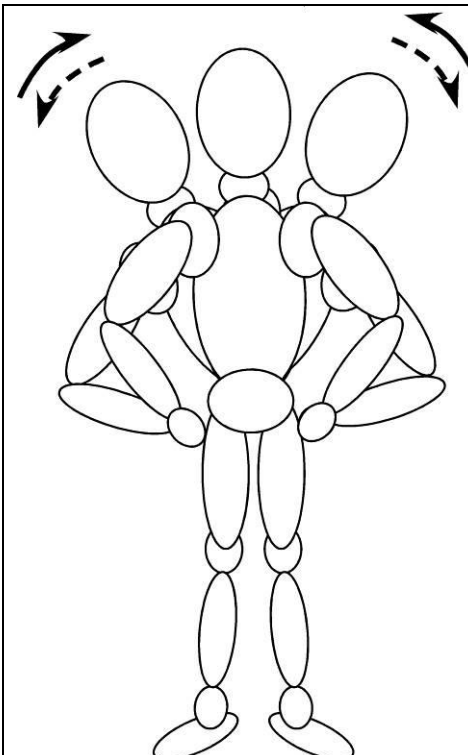
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand up straight, good posture, ‘think tall’ • Arms by your side, feet shoulder width apart • Soften knees, pull abdominals in • Gently circle the arm, starting with small circles and arm bent leading the movement with elbow to start • Gradually increase the range • Make it a smooth controlled movement • When using full arm, try to brush the arm against the ear • Finish same position as start
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Knee Lifts



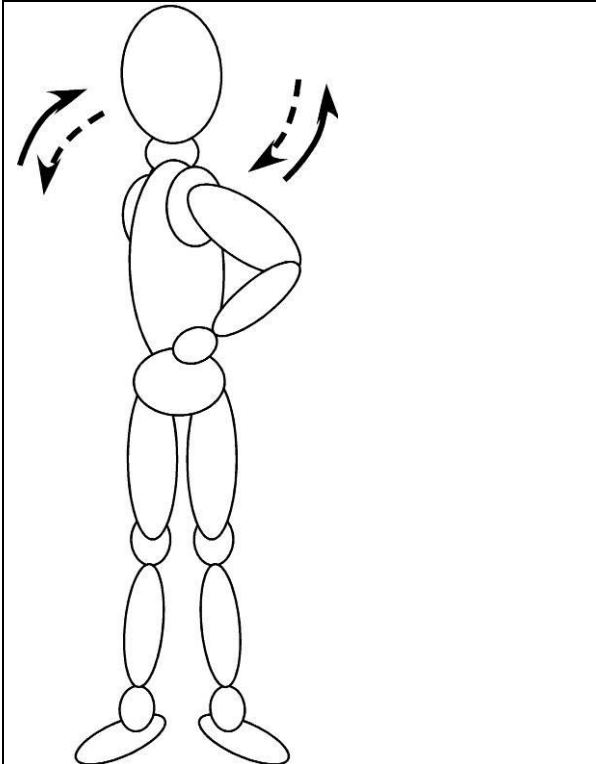
- Stand up straight, good posture, 'think tall'
- Arms by your side, feet shoulder width apart
- Lift knee up until the thigh is no higher than the parallel with the floor and lower it again
- Repeat with the other knee
- Keep back straight & chest lifted throughout the movement
- Make it a smooth controlled movement
- Some support may be required for stability e.g. wall, tree, fence etc
- Finish same position as start

Sideways Tilts



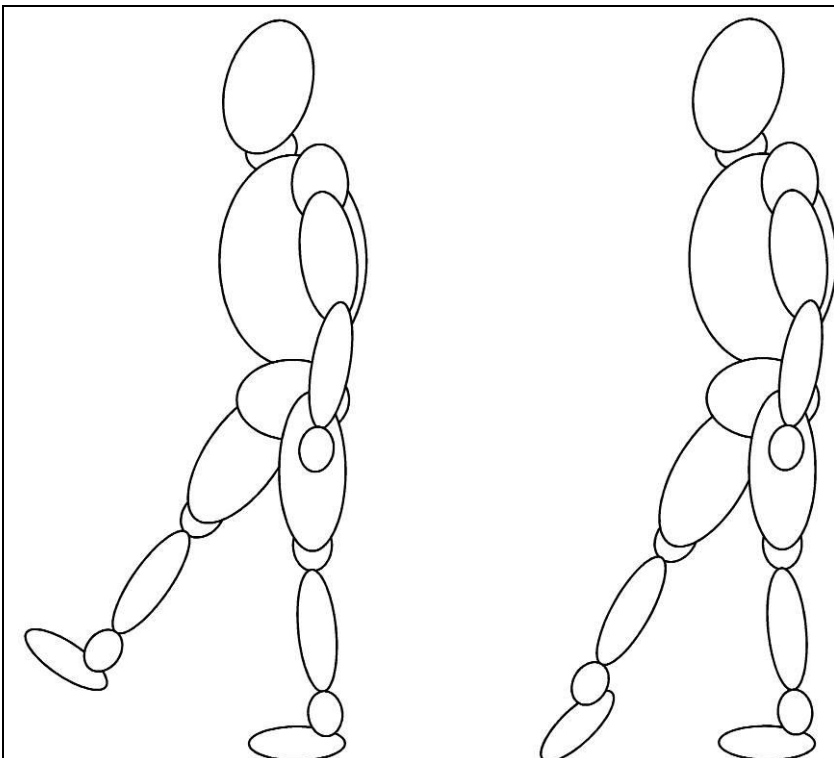
- Stand up straight, good posture, 'think tall'
- Hands on hips, knees slightly bent with feet shoulder width apart
- Slowly tilt the upper body to the side (within a comfortable range) and return to upright position
- Repeat other side
- Keep chest lifted throughout the movement
- Keep hips fixed – moving from ribs upwards
- Tilt directly to either side keeping head upright
- Keep head in line with shoulders
- Keep movement smooth and controlled
- Finish same position as start

Upper Body Twists



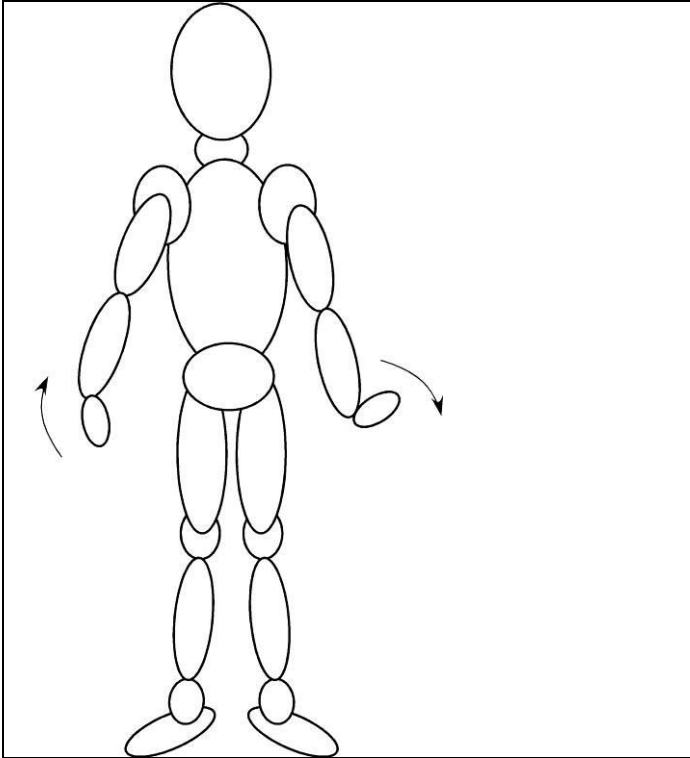
- Stand up straight, good posture, 'think tall'
- Hands on hips, knees slightly bent with feet shoulder width apart
- Whilst keeping hips fixed, rotate shoulders & upper body slowly around to the side & return to the start position
- Repeat for other side
- Keep hips fixed – moving from ribs upwards
- Keep the body upright
- Turn the head to keep it in line with the shoulders
- Keep movement smooth & controlled
- Finish same position as start

Heel & Toe



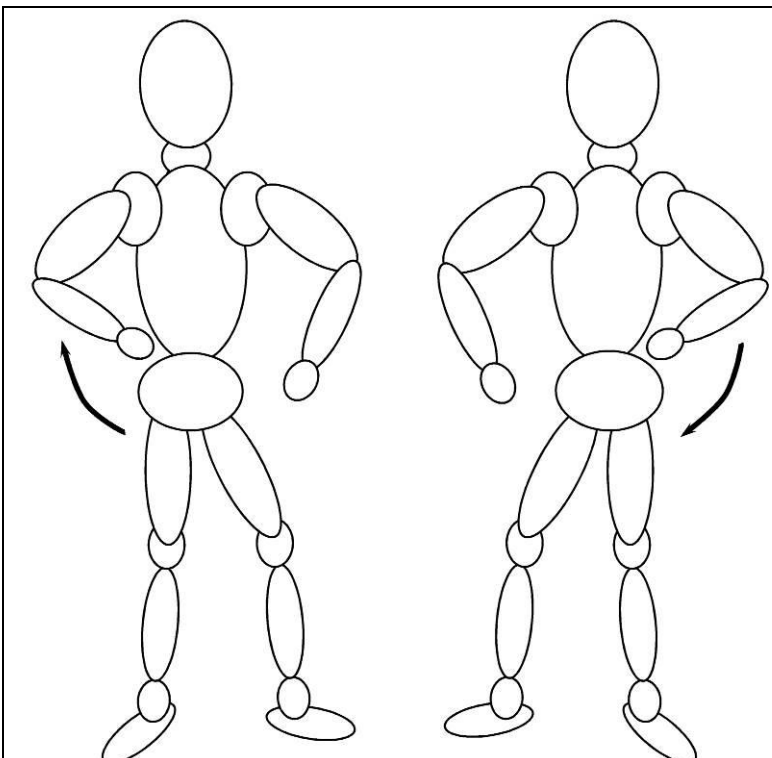
- Stand up straight, good posture, 'think tall'
- Hands on hips or relaxed by side
- Knees slightly bent & feet shoulder width apart
- Keep supporting leg slightly bent and touch the floor with the heel and then the toe of the other leg
- Return to start position and repeat with second leg
- Keep good posture in upper body, with chest lifted and abdominals pulled in
- Some support may be required – hold on to wall, fence, tree etc
- Keep movement smooth & relaxed, trying to get as full a range of movement in the ankle as possible
- Finish same position as start

Wrist Circles



- Stand up straight with feet shoulder width apart, arms slightly out in front of the body
- Rotate wrists slowly in a circular fashion
- Finish same position as start

Hip Circles



- Stand up straight, good posture, 'think tall'
- Arms by side or placed on hips, with feet shoulder width apart
- Soften the knees and pull abdominals in
- Keeping upper body fixed, slowly rotate the hips in a circular motion
- Rotate hips slowly under full control
- Try to make more of a 'D' shape, taking care not to arch the back
- Keep upper body fixed
- Finish same position as start

Examples of Cool Down Activities

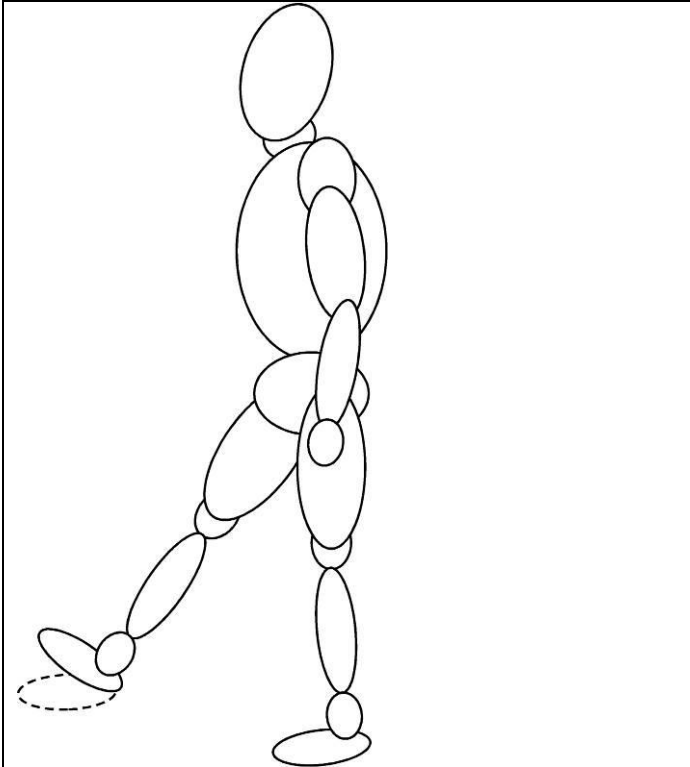
Shoulder Stretch

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit or stand with feet apart. • Take a position with the arms behind the head as shown in the illustration • From this position hold the elbow of one arm with the other hand. • Gently pull the elbow across behind the head. • Hold for 15-30 seconds
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Arm & Shoulder Stretch

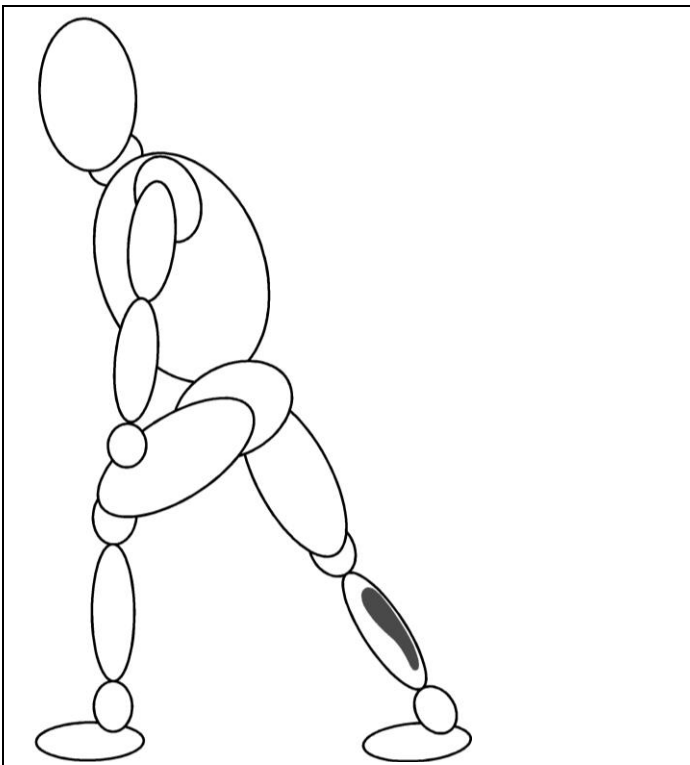
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a standing or seated position and link the fingers above the head with the palms down • Lift the arms up and back • Hold for 15-30 seconds
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Ankle Flex



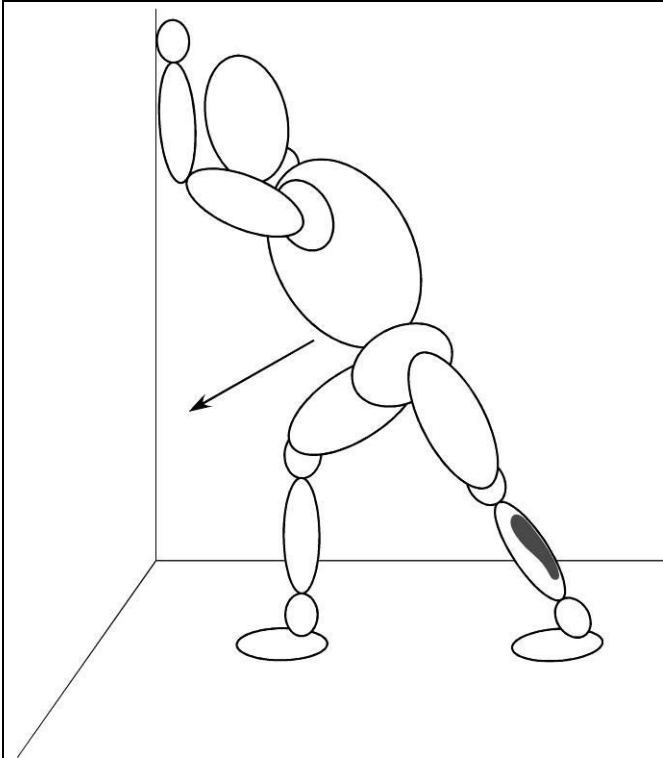
- Balance on one leg
- Point the toe upwards towards the ground and hold for 4-6 seconds
- Then point the toe up to the roof and hold again for 4-6 seconds
- Move the toes right and left holding for 4 -6 seconds each time
- Then repeat

Calf Muscle Stretch



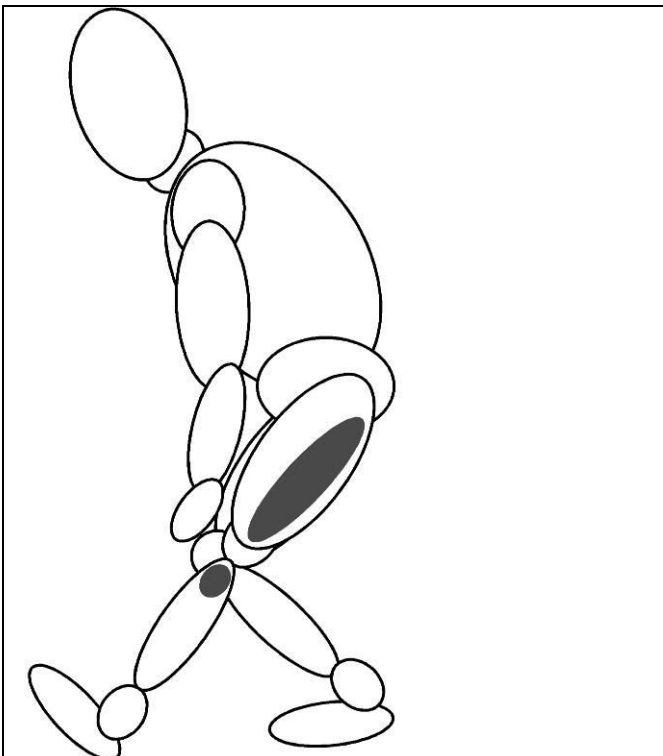
- Take the position as illustrated
- Keeping the back leg straight and the heel on the ground.
- Lean forward bending the front leg.
- The participants will feel the slight tension and should relax in this position holding the stretch for 15 – 30 seconds.
- This stretch suits those less physically able

Alternative calf muscle stretch



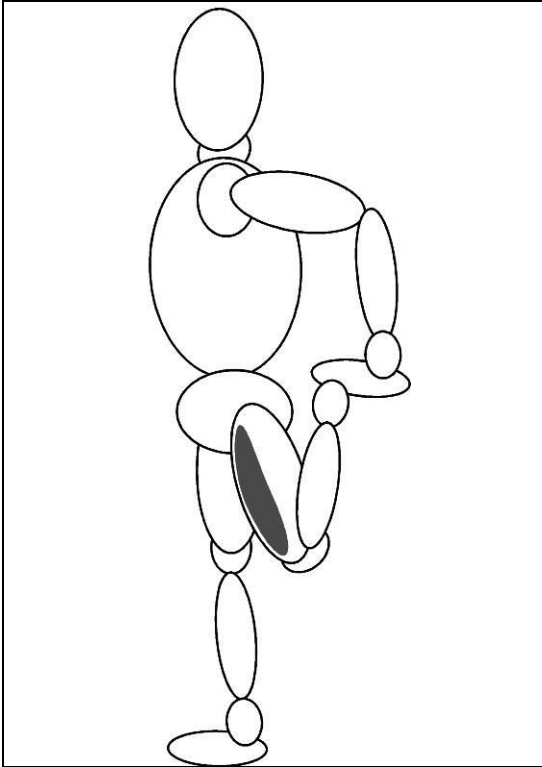
- Rest the forenames against a wall with legs in a straddle position so that the front foot is a couple of feet away from the wall
- Slide the rear leg back keeping the heel in contact with floor until slight tension is felt at the back of calf
- Keeping the back straight, **SLOWLY** move the hips forward until the stretch is felt at the back of the lower leg and hold. **SLOWLY** return to the start position and repeat with the other leg
- Keep back straight and in line with spine
- Keep feet in line with body and heels flat on the floor
- Finish same position as start

Hamstring Stretch



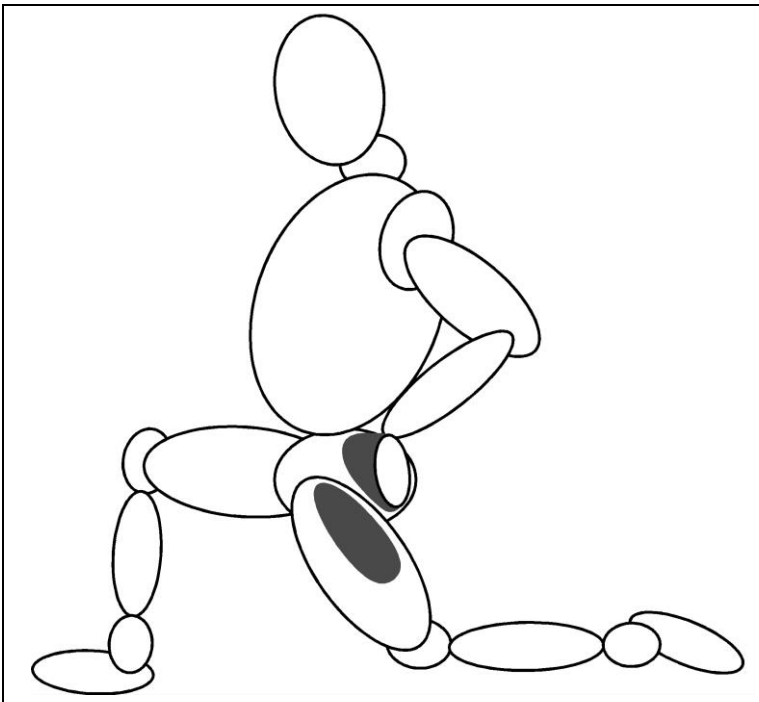
- Take the position as illustrated
- Back leg should be bent and the front leg straight
- Sink the weight down over the back leg
- The back foot should be flat on the ground with the front toes lifting up to ceiling
- Hold for 15-30 seconds
- Alternate legs

Hip flexor & quadriceps stretch



- From a standing position with feet hip distance apart, take one leg back aiming to get the heel towards the bottom
- Keep back straight as you take the leg behind you
- Aim to grasp the shoelaces part of the foot or hold the back of the trousers
- You can use a belt or towel if this is more comfortable
- Keep back straight and head in line with spine
- Keep chest lifted, hips forward and both knees in line
- Finish same position as start

Alternative stretch for quadriceps for those less physically able/require more support



- Take one step forward, ensuring back is straight and keeping knee is directly above the toes
- Keeping back leg straight, push back leg as far away behind as is comfortable, until stretch is felt
- Make sure both feet are facing forwards
- Another stretch would be to go in to a lunge position as pictured, almost kneeling on back leg
- Hold the position for at least 15 seconds
- Repeat on other leg