COOL-DOWN GUIDE



FLAG FOOTBALL

Special Olympics

Special Olympics Health

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Cool-Down Directions

When your training, practice or sport session is complete, you should always cool-down. A good cool-down allows your body to gradually return to a state of rest.

A typical cool-down includes:

1. Light aerobic activity
2. Static stretching

The aerobic activity in a cool-down should decrease in intensity It could be a light jog, moving into a brisk walk and finally ending to a slow walk.

After you complete the light aerobic activity, you will want to stretch. Stretching for flexibility is very effective in the cool-down.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Hold each stretch for **at least 30 seconds.**
- **Stretch both sides** – if you stretch your right shoulder muscle, stretch the left!
- Stretches should be performed to **mild discomfort**, but should not be painful.

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Sample Cool-Down

LIGHT AEROBIC ACTIVITY

The light aerobic activity in a cool-down should decrease in intensity It could be a light jog, moving into a brisk walk and finally ending to a slow walk.

STATIC STRETCHES

Unlike dynamic stretches, static stretches consist of one position that is held in place. If you don't have enough time, select a few that focus on the different muscles used in your sport:

- Butterfly Stretch
- Calf Stretch
- Cross Arm Shoulder Stretch
- Downward Dog
- Figure Four Stretch
- Hamstring Stretch
- Kneeling Hip Stretch
- Quadriceps Stretch
- Standing Chest Stretch
- Standing Straddle Stretch
- Wrist Flexion and Extension

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Butterfly Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Sit on the ground with the bottoms of your feet touching each other.
- Let your knees fall toward the floor. Your feet should be close to your body.
- Sit tall and lean forward over your feet.
- You should feel a stretch in your groin.



Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Robbie Albano

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Calf Stretch



DIRECTIONS

- Stand facing a wall. Put your hands against the wall at shoulder height.
- Put one foot in front of the other.
- Bend your elbows and lean in toward the wall. You will feel a stretch in your calves.
- Keep your knee straight and your hips forward. Make sure your heel stays on the ground.
- Switch your feet and repeat the stretch.

Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Christa Bleull

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Cross Arm Shoulder Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Cross your left arm across your chest with your elbow slightly bent. Make sure to keep your left shoulder down away from your ear.
- Place your right hand on the back of your left arm just above the elbow. Pull your left arm in toward your chest until you feel a stretch. Repeat with your right arm.



Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Jimmy Tadlock

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Downward Dog

DIRECTIONS

- Start on your hands and knees. Curl your toes under and raise up your hips and straighten your legs as much as possible.
- Keep your arms and legs straight.
- Keep your toes pointed forward and let your head hang down.



Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Jimmy Tadlock

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Figure Four Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Lay on the ground with your right knee in the air.
- Put your left ankle on top of your right thigh.
- Grab underneath your right thigh. Pull your thigh towards your chest. You should feel a stretch in your left hip.
- Switch legs and repeat the stretch.



Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Munir Vohra

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Hamstring Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Stand tall with your left foot a few inches in front of your right foot. Lift your left toes.
- Bend your right knee slightly and lean your body forward.
- Reach for your left toes with your left hand. Keep your right hand on top of your right thigh for balance and support.
- You should feel a stretch in the back of your left leg.
- Repeat the stretch with your right leg forward.



NOTE: You can also do this stretch kneeling on the ground.



Featuring Special Olympics athletes, Alicia Gogue and Novie Craven

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Kneeling Hip Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Kneel on the ground.
- Take one big step forward. Bend your front leg.
- Push your hips forward and put your hands on your hips. You should feel a stretch in your back leg's hip area.
- Repeat the stretch with the other leg in front.



Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Solomon Burke

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Quadriceps Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Stand up tall and shift your weight to your right leg.
- Lift your left foot and hold it with your left hand. You may put your right hand on a stable surface, like the back of a chair or wall, to help you balance.
- Pull your left foot toward your body until you feel a stretch in the front of your left leg.
- Switch legs and repeat the stretch on your right leg.



NOTE: You can also do this stretch laying down.



Featuring Special Olympics athletes, Danilo Benitez and John Bossard II

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Standing Chest Stretch



DIRECTIONS

- Stand and put your hands together behind your back.
- Raise your hands up as high as possible while keeping your elbows straight. Push your chest forward.
- Keep your back straight and chin up.

Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Joe Wu

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Standing Straddle Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width.
- Bend forward at your hips and reach toward the ground keeping your knees straight.
- Try to place your hands flat on the ground between your feet.





Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Jimmy Tadlock

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Wrist Flexion & Extension



FLEXION



EXTENSION

DIRECTIONS

- Sit or stand with your head up and looking forward.
- **Extension:** Turn your palm towards the ground. Use the other hand to pull your hand down toward the ground.
- **Flexion:** Turn your palm face up toward the ceiling. Use the other hand to pull your fingers back toward the ground.
- Switch arms and repeat both stretches.

Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Robbie Albano

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Benefits of a Cool-Down

It is just as important to have a good cool-down as it is to have a good warm-up. A good cool-down **allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest.**

Physical and Mental Benefits

- Decrease heart rate
- Decrease breathing rate
- Decrease body and muscle temperature
- Returns rate of blood flow from the active muscles to resting level
- Decrease muscle soreness
- Improve flexibility
- Increases the rate of recovery from exercise
- Promote relaxation

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