



FOUNDATIONS OF FLEXIBILITY: LOOSENING THE HAMSTRINGS

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Many CrossFitters find themselves pursuing strength to get to Rx levels, but sometimes all you need do is focus on the foundations of CrossFit to find balance and develop into a well-rounded athlete. Focusing too much on one skill—or neglecting one in particular—can negatively impact the others. For example, many athletes only think about mobility during a warm-up or if it's specifically programmed into a WOD. Investing more time on technique, mobility and flexibility will condition the body for better results.

Yoga can play an important role in an athlete's training. Whether you're aiming for a 600lb back squat or a 5:30 mile, you must be flexible. The word yoga, meaning 'union', connects two powerful forces that work in opposite directions and harnesses them toward a single goal of finding balance. Balance is the key to injury prevention and athletic performance.

Think about strong athletes. How would you describe how they perform and how they look physically? Are they able to spring fluidly during double-unders? Do their legs float when they run or are they heavy? To perform these movements (and many others), we must have stiffness around the hips and core. This stiffness helps transfer energy to the ground to produce a stronger and faster movement with less effort. Think about how often your coach uses the cue to "keep your core tight!" However, an athlete can be too stiff when it comes to exercise and performance is limited as a result. Athletes must be able to move fluidly through the proper range of motion to access strength in their hips and core when performing any movement. Yoga is one way to access flexibility and find balance in the body, leading you to that ultimate goal of hitting Rx.

Reclining Hand to Toe: This position provides a stretch for the hamstring of the raised leg. Lay on your back and use a band or strap to grab your foot. Take the strap around your wrist to relieve pressure from your wrists (pictured top left). Use your breath to draw the foot towards your torso. Keep your bottom leg on the ground and toes flexing towards your torso. Draw your inner thighs toward each other and keep your shoulder blades on the ground. Hold, and repeat on the other leg.

½ Split: Provides a stretch for the hamstrings and hip flexors. If your hamstrings, quadriceps and groin are too tight, place two blocks or dumbbells on each side of your pelvis for stability. Bring your right knee down to the floor and straighten your left leg in front of you. Keep your hip stacked over your knee. Hold, and repeat on the other leg.

Pyramid Pose: Provides a stretch in the hamstrings, shoulders, chest and hips. Hold each elbow with the opposite hand. If your shoulders allow, bring your hands into a reverse prayer position, as show. Step your right foot forward. Turn your left foot in 45 degrees to the right and your right foot out to the right 90 degrees. Square your pelvis forward and begin to tilt forward, stopping when your spine comes to a neutral