

Stretching with a Strap

While some participants don't stick around for the cooldown, those who do are rewarded with the many benefits that [stretching](#) offers. Help students go a little deeper with a very simple yet versatile tool: a stretching strap.

Straps are great to have in your fitness toolbox (and relatively inexpensive for the program manager's budget). They not only assist with proper positioning and numerous techniques but also nullify the "I'm not flexible enough" excuse.

Five Techniques

Before we get to the stretches, consider these options:

- For [dynamic stretching](#)—which assists with muscle and joint alignment and is a great way to prepare and release a particular part of the body—hold or anchor the strap, and move the body through a range of moderate, targeted movements. Slowly increase intensity and speed.
- Vary position by going from standing to the floor, for example, or by adding internal and external rotation. Revisit positions more than once in a progression, or stretch 2–5 times for optimal effect.
- Hold the strap ends across a muscle group and compress. Move up and down with increased pressure. While compressing, oscillate back and forth to increase circulation and reduce tension.
- Help inflexible participants by introducing the “static and relax” technique: Support a body part with the strap, minimizing stress to other areas, and breathe deeply.
- Work functionally through a [range of motion](#). While supporting an area of the body with the strap, rotate and add a minimal amount of pressure. Keep movements small at first, then go larger (reverse direction, too), unilaterally or bilaterally, depending on the exercise.

Shoulder Rotation

- From seated or standing position, hold strap very wide, one end in each hand, both arms down, on outside of thighs. Keep arms straight; do not lock elbows.
- Pull strap apart slightly and raise arms up and overhead, ending with arms behind lower back.
- Do not allow body to waver or squirm during rotation; maintain great upper-body posture.
- Ensure that strap moves evenly on both sides. This should be challenging, not painful.
- Regression: Widen grip. Progression: Shorten grip.

Hip Mobility

- Lie supine, legs fully extended.
- Place strap around right arch, leg straight. Keep tension in strap, and lift leg.

- Make small circles, then progress to making larger circles, moving slowly.
- Bend knee, if needed, when moving across front of body. Back can come off floor slightly for comfort.
- Reverse direction; switch sides.

Hamstring Progression

- Begin seated, legs fully extended.
- Pull body forward to stretch hamstring.
- Lean back with good [posture](#), and lift R leg, keeping it fairly straight while anchoring left leg.
- Drive heel to ceiling, butt to ground.
- Lie down, and pull R leg toward chest, pressing R foot into strap and keeping L leg anchored.
- To enhance stretch, engage quadriceps, or externally and internally rotate R leg from hip.
- Switch sides.

About the Author

[Aileen Sheron](#) **IDEA Author/Presenter**

An innovator and fitness entrepreneur since 1979, Aileen Sheron has starred in over thirty exercise videos and has been featured on TV, radio, and in print as a fitness expert. An international presenter and continuing education provider for over 26 years, she is the inventor of the patented OmniBall®, as well as other products, and consults on product and program development. Certifications: ACE and AFAA

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