

# ***Dynamic Warm Up For Better Soccer Performance***



**By Josh Hewett**

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Many soccer players, and even some “old-school” coaches, still perform static stretches before a game, practice, or training. This is likely because they believe that passive stretching will help prevent injury, improve performance, and reduce muscle soreness. However, there is little or no scientific evidence to support this belief, and stretching this way before physical activity could actually be doing more harm than good!

It's time to look at a better way to prepare your body for exercise and sport: **The Dynamic Warm Up.**

First let's look at some different forms of stretching. There are 2 main categories of stretching: passive and active.

**Passive stretching** is when you use an outside force other than your own muscle to move a joint or limb beyond its active range of motion, to put your body into a position that you couldn't do by yourself (such as when you lean into a wall, or have a partner push you into a deeper stretch, without engaging your own muscles). Unfortunately, this is the most common form of stretching used.

Although most people are more familiar with traditional passive stretching it can actually hurt your performance and may even lead to injury. Research from the American Journal of Applied Physiology and reports brought to us by the American College of Sports Medicine show that passive stretching can decrease strength and muscular power output by up to 20 %.

Passive stretching can also tear your soft tissue thus creating less available muscle for you to create power. This is especially significant if you consider that many athletes are still doing passive stretching **prior** to training or competition!

**Active stretching** doesn't involve external force and thus doesn't have the same negative effects as passive, static stretching. It involves actively using your own muscles to achieve range of motion; as the antagonist (opposite) muscle contracts, the agonist (target) muscle groups lengthen and relax. This is a safer, more effective method of maintaining a healthy range of motion, while increasing joint stability and strength.



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## Dynamic Warm Up

A dynamic warm up is a form of active range of motion that is recommended before training, practice or competition, and has been shown to reduce **muscle tightness** while increasing nervous system activation. Dynamic warm up exercises involve moving parts of your body and gradually increasing reach, speed of movement, or both.

Dynamic stretching consists of controlled leg and arm swings that **gently** and progressively move you *within* the limits of your range of motion. Dynamic stretching avoids jerky, bouncing motions and tends to incorporate more sport-specific movements, such as arm circles, torso rotations, butt kicks, high knee lifts and walking lunges (without weights). This type of warm up routine will help to prepare your muscles for exercise.

### The Dynamic Warm Up Exercises (perform 1 set 15 seconds each):

- **High knee walking** will gradually warm up your quads and hip flexors



- **High knees with a skip** will progressively increase your hip mobility. Push off your opposite leg with each step.



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- **Walking Butt kicks** involve your hamstrings, and prepare you for fast butt kicks. Kick your heel back toward your butt with each step.



- **Fast Butt kicks** activate your hamstrings and prepare them for activity.



- **Lateral lunges** gradually increase your hip and groin mobility. Make sure your knees track over your feet as you step sideways. 15 seconds in each direction.

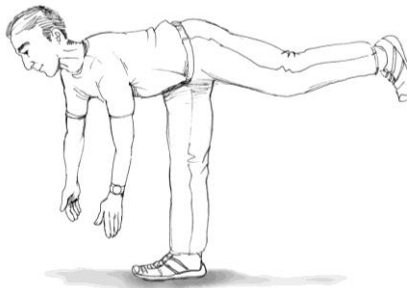


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- **Grapevine** – Alternate crossing each foot in front and then behind the other. Great for athletic coordination. Repeat in both directions.



- **1 leg deadlift walk** – This drill is great for strengthening your hamstrings, glutes, and core, while improving your balance.



- **Straight leg swings** with reach across, actively lengthen your hamstrings & improve rotation at the waist while developing core stability.



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- **Lunge walk** – Slowly lower yourself into the lunge position with each step until your knees are bent to about 90 degrees. Push off the front leg as you lunge forward. Keep your core stable.



- **Reverse Lunge walk** – The technique is similar to the forward lunge. As with actual sport, you need to be comfortable moving in every direction.
- **Heel walking** will strengthen your tibialis anterior (shins) and improve ankle mobility, as well as helping to prevent shin splints. Simply walk on your heels for about 15 seconds without letting the balls of your feet and toes touch the ground.
- **Toe walking** strengthens your calves while improving your balance. Simply walk on the balls of your feet for a few seconds while keeping your heels off the ground. Heel & toe walking will prepare your ankles for activity & help protect them from injury.
- **Arm circles** help improve blood flow and range of motion in the shoulders and upper body. Gradually increase your range of motion and speed of arm movement. 15 seconds in both directions.



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## Conclusion:

Athletes, coaches, trainers, and others need to use the combination of strength training, conditioning, and warming up that's best for a given sport or activity. In general, it is recommended to perform a dynamic warm up before training and incorporate some active range stretches afterwards. Also consider that stretching naturally occurs when you exercise. In order to contract a muscle, the opposite muscle groups have to be relaxed and lengthening.

I encourage you to research this information more yourself and make an educated decision. It may be time to re-evaluate your approach to flexibility training.

Josh Hewett

To Watch a Video Demonstration of a [Full Dynamic Warm Up Click HERE](#).

To check out the complete program go to [www.SoccerAthletics.com](http://www.SoccerAthletics.com)

## About The Author:



**Josh Hewett**, BA Kin, is a certified trainer and the creator of the DVD: “[Building the Complete Soccer Athlete: Train Like a Pro](#)”, a comprehensive training resource for soccer athletes.

He has been working in the fitness and physical conditioning industry for over 20 years, and has helped hundreds of people reach their fitness and performance goals.

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## **DYNAMIC WARMUP**

(Quick Reference List)

*15 Seconds of Each of the Following Movements*

- **High knee walking** progressing to High knees with skip
- **Walking butt kicks** progressing to Fast Butt kicks
- **Lateral lunges** both directions
- **Grapevines** both directions (feet crossing in front and behind)
- **Walking lunges**, forward and reverse
- **Single leg deadlift walk** (lean forward, reach toward ground)
- **Straight leg swings**, reaching across with opposite arm
- **Heel and toe walking**
- **Arm circles both directions** (start slow, increasing speed)