



Welcome to your bonus edition of Storm Force Flexibility written by Jon Le Tocq, the leading fat loss and conditioning expert in the Midlands.

You can jump on to Jon's fat loss and conditioning newsletter at <http://www.stormforcefitness.com> or by visiting his blog at <http://www.stormforcefitness.blogspot.com>.

Now get stretching!



## **Introduction to Flexibility**

Flexibility is one of the most underrated and misunderstood elements of health and fitness. As usual, everyone has their own opinions but every expert agrees that very, very few people spend enough time working on it.

An individual rarely pays any attention to their flexibility until they suffer an injury by which time it is often too late and they can be left with a physical issue which niggles at them for a long time or worse, it actually stops them from performing the activities they want to. This obviously applies to people who wish to be able to perform a particular sport at a higher level but is equally applicable to someone who's back pain or dodgy hip stops them lifting everyday objects or playing with the kids.

You can see one of the most common aspects of modern society in operation here. Because an individual cannot see the immediate, direct benefit of flexibility training they are more likely to favour lifting weights and running which make them feel like they're benefiting immediately. Unfortunately in the long-term such an attitude is highly likely to hamper your progress in the very exercises you are trying to improve at!

The fact is that flexibility should receive as much attention in your life as a Storm Force Fitness member as training and nutrition does. You cannot separate the three elements as they are all interlinked and cannot be seen as independent.

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If you are unable to perform certain movements due to excessive muscle tension or poor joint mobility it causes too problems. Firstly, if you can't perform an exercise through the full range of motion you will not be able to gain all the benefits in terms of building muscles, burning calories and increasing strength. Secondly, it may be outright dangerous. For instance, if you have poor mobility in your hips, greater pressure is put on you lower back to be mobile to allow the movements you are trying to perform. This is very bad news as our lower backs should be strong and stable rather than loose and hypermobile. Clearly if you are training often and at a high intensity as is required by the Storm Force Fitness training programs, there is an increased risk of injury if you are not taking steps to improve your flexibility.

Let's take a step back now and learn exactly what flexibility is.

At first it seems obvious. The common view is that flexibility is simply how far your muscles can be stretched. Unfortunately it is this belief which prevents many of those who do take the time to stretch from ever really making improvements.

Firstly, the term flexibility actually includes both the ability of your muscles to stretch and the ability of your joints to move through a full range of motion. The two can't be treated as separate functions as one will affect the other so we need to take a holistic approach to improving flexibility and consequently, your ability to move properly. If we look at the ankle joint for instance, it doesn't matter how often or for how long you stretch your calf muscles if the joint itself is locked up and immobile. This may be due your lifestyle or old injuries which have caused scar tissue to build up.

In this case you need to mobilise your ankle joint using the drills you are going to learn in Storm Force Flexibility in conjunction with increasing the length of the muscles which are tight. Trying to stretch a muscle when the joint won't allow it is like a car trying to drive into the garage with the door shut!

This applies to all joints in the body and whilst joints are connected by various muscles, every joint must be addressed as mobility and flexibility in one area does not mean mobility and flexibility in all other areas.

It is also critical to understand that problems in one joint may cause problems further up or down your body since our bodies don't work as individual parts but as one interconnected chain.

Mike Boyle<sup>1</sup> talks of our bodies as a 'stack' of joints. Certain joints should be mobile whereas other joints need to a high level of stability to help us function properly. Boyle's 'stack' looks like this:

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<sup>1</sup> Boyle, M, *A joint-by-joint approach*, <http://www.t-nation.com/readArticle.do?id=1618485> (19 June 2008)



Ankles	-	Mobility required
Knees	-	Stability required
Hips	-	Mobility required
Lumbar spine (lower part of spine)	-	Stability required
Thoracic spine (upper part of spine)	-	Mobility required
Shoulders	-	Stability required

This is a simplified view of the way joints work as certain movement will provide exceptions to the rule but for the scope of this course this will explain how your joints are linked together.

Let's say you have poor ankle mobility. If you are trying to squat down requiring your shin bone to move forward, but your ankle won't allow it, the likelihood is that your knee will fall inwards to compensate.

In the long-term, a chain of events can occur changing those joints which need to stable to be more mobile and vice-versa. Certain joints will be forced into positions they are not designed for and at the same time the muscles attached to these joints may get overstretched increasing your risk of pain or injury.

*So what factors affect your flexibility?*

These parameters of flexibility are adapted from Mel Siff's work.<sup>2</sup>

### **Parameters of flexibility**

1. **Exercise and training history.** Those who have always taken regular exercise generally have better flexibility than those with sedentary lifestyles who sit down for most of the day at work then go home to sit on the sofa. This isn't always the case but is a good general rule. However, the type of exercise will also be important. For instance, the guys who have spent their whole life lifting heavy weights to get as big as possible with little regard to movement performance, frequently have very poor flexibility. This becomes even more obvious if they don't practice balanced training but focus on certain muscles for the beach!
2. **Age.** The older we get the less flexible we get leaving us more prone to movement dysfunction, aches and pains and injuries.
3. **Gender.** Females tend to be more flexible than males leaving males more prone to flexibility-related injuries particularly if they are involved in fast-paced, dynamic sports such as football or rugby.

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<sup>2</sup> Siff M, *Supertraining*, 2003, 6<sup>th</sup> ed.



4. **Temperature.** The warmer your muscle tissue is prior to stretching, the greater increases you can expect in the length of the muscle following the session.
5. **Static or dynamic flexibility.** As mentioned previously it is important to consider how your muscles and joints perform in a dynamic situation compared to in standing or sitting. If you play a lot of sport you need to consider how your muscles and joints perform during the activity not just when you are trying a quick stretch at home.
6. **Type of movement.** Most of our muscles and joints perform more than one movement so you need to consider what type of movement you need to be flexible for. For instance, just because you can scratch any point on your back because you have mobile shoulder joints, doesn't necessarily mean your shoulders will perform well under the pressure of a serve in tennis.

We could go very deeply into what does or doesn't affect flexibility in a variety of situations but the key is to simply follow the mobility and stretching procedures outlined in Storm Force Flexibility with as much enthusiasm as the nutrition and training aspects to make excellent progress.

The progressions you will learn combine research of and experience with a variety of methods. The one clear conclusion which can be made about flexibility is that every individual, every muscle and every joint can act differently so be open to altering procedures as you practice them.

Take the time to listen to your body and make notes on what works for you and what doesn't. Such an attitude can save you hours of ineffective stretching in the future. You will have different needs to the next person who reads this so you may need to focus on certain areas of your body more than others.

Mobility and flexibility issues can be more complex than they first appear so if you are keen to address your movement issues you are advised to seek out a top fitness professional with suitable qualifications. Any good trainer or therapist will have an assessment process in place to assess various movements and exercises which test muscles and joints from a variety of angles. If they don't have any assessment processes in place and want to launch straight into your training, steer well clear – they're more concerned about your money than your body!

Let's get into some flexibility work now! In-keeping with the Storm Force Fitness concept of steady progress, do yourself a favour and don't try to go straight to the later Flexibility Forces unless you are 100% sure you are able to perform the earlier forces with a high level of competence and need something more to make further progress.



Like the training programs, complexity doesn't always mean better results. You are likely to experience greater improvements if you perform the basics well rather than doing the more advanced drills badly!



## **Storm Force Flexibility 1**

As you progress through Storm Force Flexibility you will learn that to make real improvements to your flexibility and truly increase the range of motion you can achieve in all of your joints, you need to build specific mobility and flexibility sessions in to your schedule.

However, Storm Force Flexibility 1 involves learning how to warm up for exercise correctly and cool down afterwards. This has multiple purposes:

- Reduce the risk of injury during exercise by fully preparing your muscles and joints for what is to come. This applies in both a sporting context and when you are in training in the gym or at home.
- Improve your performance during exercise so that you gain maximum benefit from the training you are doing or optimise your performance on the sports field.
- Improve recovery following intense training sessions.

The problem in most commercial gyms and at an amateur sporting level is that for some reason people feel silly doing a proper warm up! Unfortunately this is the main reason for the high level of incidental injuries and overuse injuries at this level. It seems that everyone would rather spend a few weeks or even months nursing an injury and not being able to move properly, than taking 10 minutes before exercising to warm up their muscles and joints.

Those who do perform a warm up often do it as no more than a token gesture. They do a bit of light cardio and take their limbs and joints through just a small range of motion thinking they are now ready to go. They then proceed to lift weights, run or jump through the full range of motion inevitably leading to injury simply through poor preparation.

Whilst each individual sport or resistance exercise will have specific requirements depending on the joints, muscles and movement patterns involved, the dynamic warm up taught in Storm Force Flexibility 1 targets all of the primary muscles and joints and is an excellent all-round mobility and flexibility preparation process for full body training sessions which provide the backbone of Storm Force Fat Loss Training.

Those with specific injuries are advised to check with their GP or a top fitness professional as to the safety of performing any mobility or flexibility drills in order to prevent aggravating the problem.



## **PRE-TRAINING**

This dynamic warm up should be performed fully before every training session. It should take between 5-10 minutes.

Everybody suffers from some form of joint restriction particularly at the ankles, hips and upper back/shoulders known as the thoracic spine. Perform the mobility drills first then your body will be better prepared to make the most of the flexibility drills which come afterwards.

Ensure that you watch the accompanying video fully so that you understand all of the movements are able to perform them in a smooth flowing sequence in order to elevate your heart rate at the same time. There are notes below to ensure you understand the coaching points for each movement

## **MOBILITY**

### **Foam rolling:**

- Spend 1-2 minutes on each leg

*Quadriceps (front of thigh from pelvis to knee)*





*IT Band (Side of thigh from pelvis to knee)*



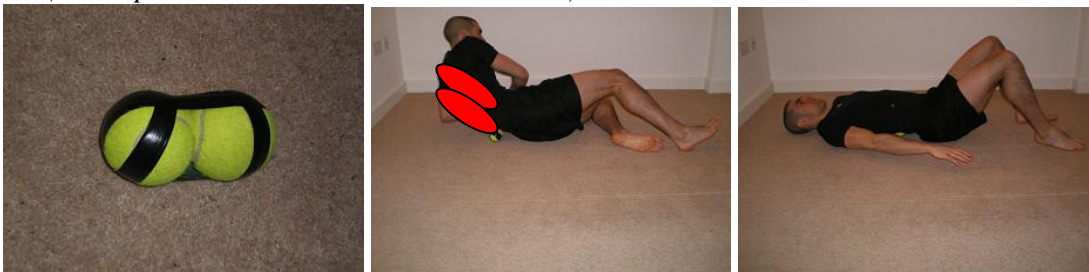
*Calves (Back of lower leg from knee to ankle)*



**Tennis balls:**

- Spend 1-2 minutes working up and down the back

*Back (From pelvis to between shoulder blades)*





**Drills:**

*Ankle drives*

10 of each on each leg (hitting all the angles)

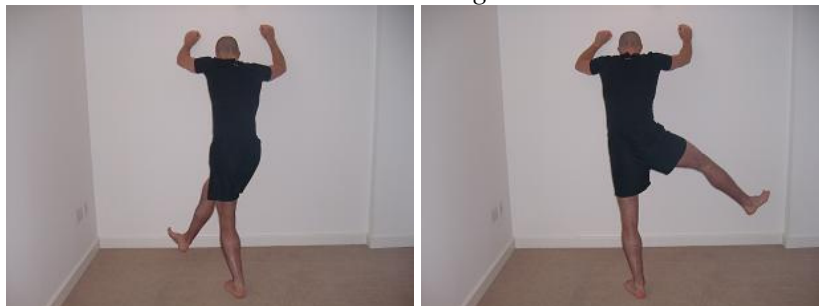


*Side view*



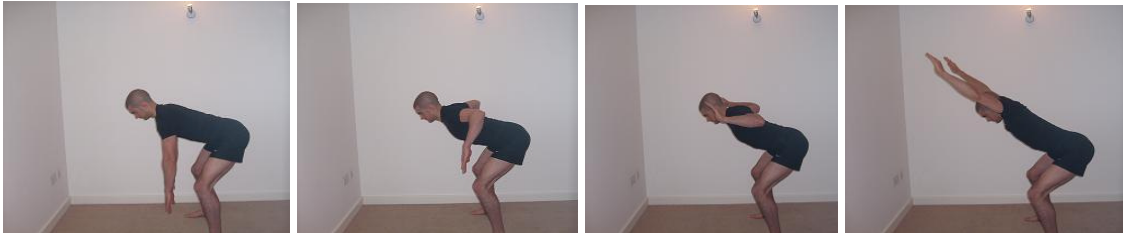
*Front view*

*Ankle swings*





*Cuban press*  
5 repetitions of the complete movement

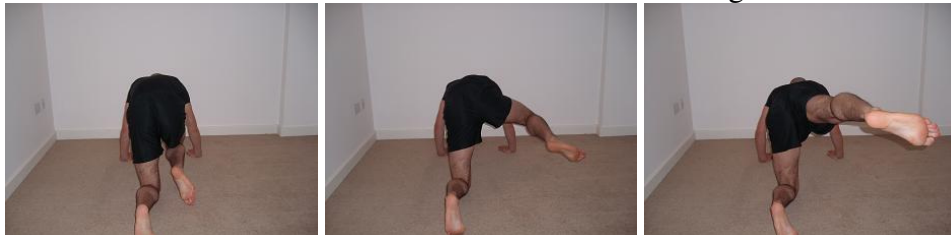


*Side view*



*Front view*

*Hip opener on all fours*  
5 rotations in both directions for each leg



*Back view*



*Side view*



## Full body warm up routine

Perform each movement 10 times. If it is a single limb movement, perform 10 on each side.

See the video of this at <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=qEa9d4o9E6o>

Chin drops  
Head tilts  
Head rotations  
Shoulder rolls (Forwards and backwards)  
Chest opener  
Overhead touch  
Body rotations  
Side knee reaches  
Hamstring swing  
Side lunge  
Reverse lunge  
Kneeling hip flexor opener  
Calf walk on hands

## POST-TRAINING FLEXIBILITY

Static flexibility as traditionally seen in gyms and sporting areas is where the individual holds a stretch in the same position for 20-30 seconds. This will do very little if anything at all to actually *increase* flexibility.

However, it can be an excellent way to wind down after an intense Storm Force Training session! It will help return the muscles to their pre-training length as during your training session the contractions of the muscle may cause them to tighten up and shorten. Some light static stretching afterwards will also elevate that feel-good factor you will get from your session!

When you progress to the later Storm Forces, you will begin to set aside specific time in your week for flexibility work. However, it is assumed at this stage that (unfortunately) the only flexibility work you are doing is incorporated into your training time.

It is therefore imperative that you at least return your muscles to their pre-training length otherwise you will find yourself very stiff and unable to train properly next time!



Remember this is light stretching as your muscles will just have taken quite a beating in training and overstretching could cause damage. It is simply used to return the muscle to the length it was before all the contractions involved in training.

*Step calf stretch*



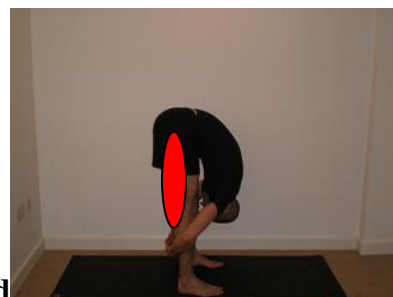
*Downward dog calf stretch*



*Hamstring stretch*



**Beginner**



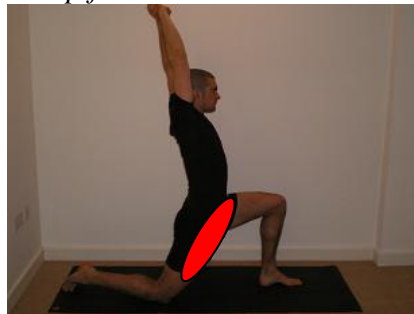
**Advanced**



*IT Band stretch*



*Hip flexor stretch*

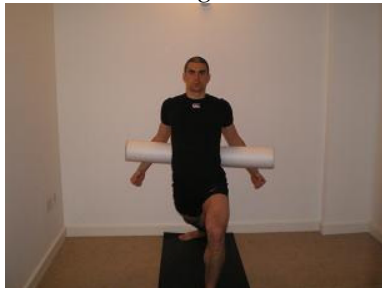


**Beginner**



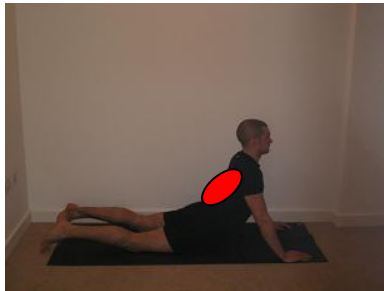
**Advanced**

*Groin lunge stretch*

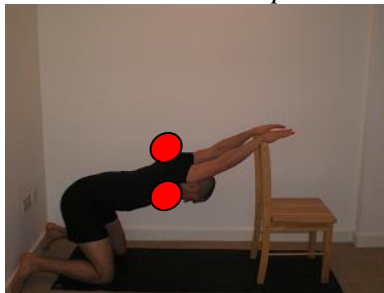




*The Cobra*



*Overhead chest opener*

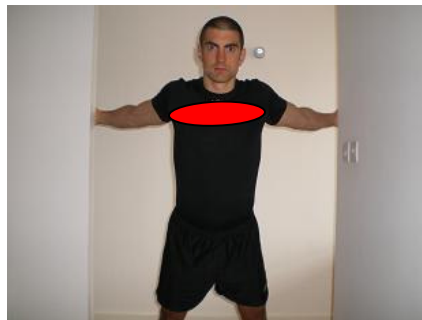


*Chest and bicep towel stretch*

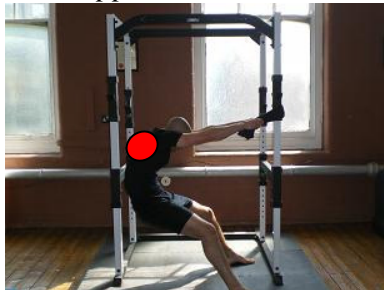




*Chest door stretch*



*Upper back stretch*

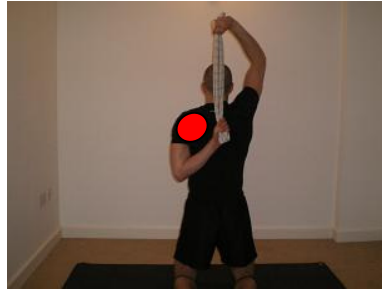


*Side bend*





*Shoulder towel stretch*





## Storm Force Flexibility 2

The next stage in your flexibility development is to take time throughout the day to do a few stretches whether at home or in the office.

Nearly all office workers will complain of headaches, stiff necks, or lower back pain at some point in their lives. Many go through their whole career battling with such afflictions! This is one of the unfortunate consequences of sitting in a chair for 8 hours each day.

If we hold our bodies in any position for a long time, and repeat it daily, our body eventually adapts to that position by shortening certain muscles. As always, everybody is different but experience shows common trends in office workers.

Generally the problem areas are as follows:

### *Tight necks and shoulders*

Being hunched over a keyboard can cause the 'hunchback' position. This tilts your face towards the floor so the only way to be able to see forward as required is to lift the chin by shortening the neck muscles and pulling the head back.

### *Tight chests*

Again, being hunched over a keyboard causes the shoulders to round tightening the chest muscles and over stretching the muscles of the upper back in the process.

### *Tight hip flexors*

These are the muscles which run across the front of your thigh, across your hips and on to the front of your spine. Because you are keeping your hips at roughly 90 degrees for most of the day, these muscles get shortened and tighten up.

Not only does this pull your upper body further into a forward leaning posture but it also causes greater stress on your spine, contributing to low back pain.

There are also significant knock-on effects. Our bodies have what we call agonist and antagonist muscles. In other words, every muscle has an opposing muscle. For instance, roughly speaking, our upper back muscles perform the opposite movements to the chest.

The hip flexors are 'counter balanced' by the glutes or 'buttocks'.



The tighter your hip flexors get, the more the glutes are stretched. If a muscle is over stretched it tends to become weaker and less effective.

In the case of our glutes, the weaker they become the more pressure is put on our hamstrings and back muscles when walking, running or lifting things from the floor. Giving your back more work to do is asking for trouble and increasing the likelihood of back pain or worse, a serious injury when exercising or even just picking objects up during your daily life.

### *Tight hamstrings*

In the same fashion as the hip flexors, because your knees are at 90 degrees in the seated position, the hamstrings are in a shortened position. These often become particularly tight in office workers and are consequently prone to injury when exercising or playing sport.

### *Tight calves*

This is most commonly a problem for female office workers who wear high heels every day. By raising the heel and tilting your foot forward, high heels can cause excessive tension in the calves (amongst other problems). Not only this, but it also causes chain reactions up your body such as the pelvis tilting forward causing a greater arch in the lower back, increasing the risk of back pain.

This can be made worse by those who sit with their feet pulled under the chair at their desk rather than planting their heels on the floor.

### *Wrist pain and/or tight forearms*

The constant use of a mouse and keyboard can cause issues in the wrist joint and the surrounding muscles and can progress to more serious conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome so should not be ignored.

## **How can you correct these postural issues?**

You now need to start making time to stretch throughout the day. This doesn't mean you need to launch into a yoga session at the water machine, simply perform the mobility and flexibility drills below whenever and wherever is practical during your working day and also after work and at weekends. Obviously some are impractical to perform in the office without being called into the boss' office but do what you can!

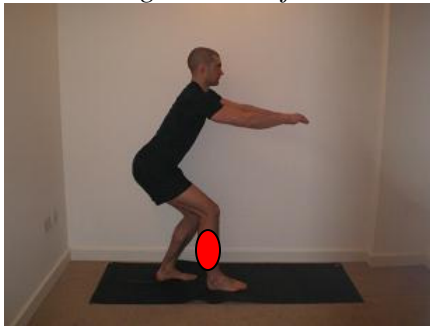
1. Perform the following mobility and flexibility drills throughout the day at your desk and/or at lunch time and after work



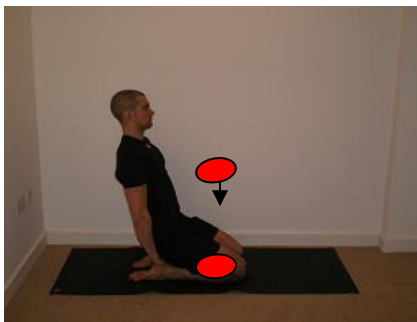
*Step calf stretch*



*Standing lower calf stretch*



*Shin stretch*





*Hamstring stretch*

**Beginner**

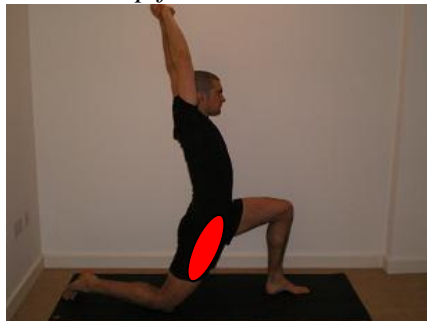


**Advanced**



*Hip flexor stretch*

**Beginner**

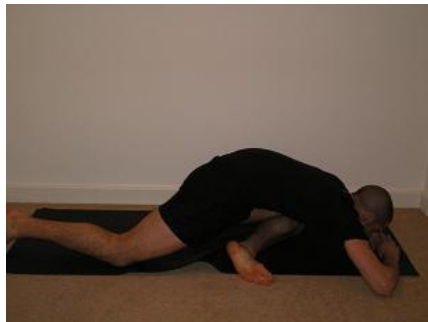


**Advanced**

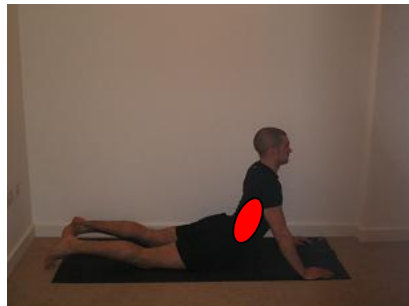




*Buttock stretch #1*



*The Cobra*





*Chest door stretch*



*Neck stretch #1*



*Neck stretch #2*



*Seated spine deloader*

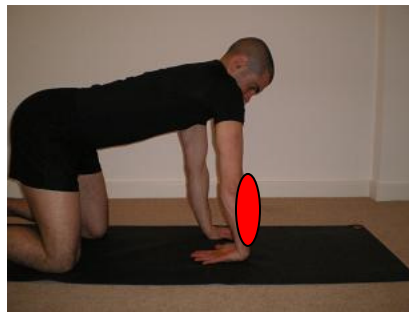




*Wrist flexor stretch*



*Wrist extensor stretch*





*Cuban press*

5 repetitions of the complete movement



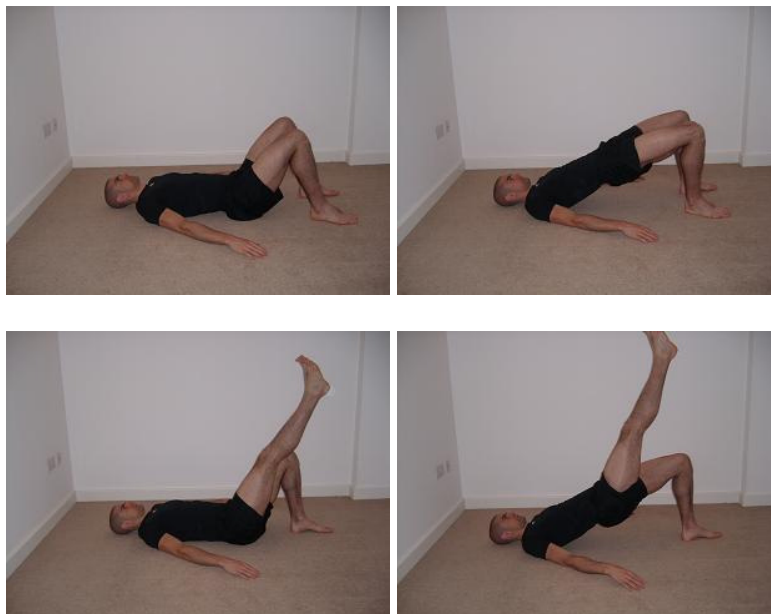
*Side view*



*Front view*

2. Perform glute activation exercises such as bridges and hip lifts. **(VIDEO)**

Squeeze your buttocks as hard as you can in order to raise your hips. **Do not** arch your back just focus on squeezing your buttocks as if you have a coin between them! It's not about how high you can get your hips but how hard you can contract your glutes.





3. Don't sleep on your front. This increases the pressure on your lower back as the weight of your body over the course of the night increases the curve in your lower back. It also forces you to hold your neck in a rotated position to prevent suffocation! Both are likely to cause you pain or discomfort. If you really can't sleep any other way, place a solid pillow under your belly-button.
4. Play hockey in the office. Well not quite. Grab a hockey ball and roll it under your foot whilst applying pressure. This will help release tension in the feet which builds up from the stresses of daily life. It will also have knock on effects all the way up your body helping you to relax more.
5. Learn to sit properly. Sit with your feet flat on the floor your eyes level with the top of your computer screen and your back flat against the back of the chair. You may need to adjust your chair and desk to achieve this. Businesses are paying more and more attention to 'work station ergonomics' so don't be afraid to ask for an assessment to ensure you are sitting correctly.
6. Learn to stand up properly from your chair. Most people tend to just stand straight up from the slumped position they work in. This puts more pressure on the lower back. Instead, lift you head and chest up, tighten your stomach muscles by imagining someone is about to punch you in the stomach then stand up by pushing through your heels and squeezing your bum.
7. Ladies – wear flat shoes whenever possible. Failing that, if you don't have smelly feet and your boss allows it, walk around the office with your shoes off.

Don't forget to keep working on the warm up and cool down routines from Storm Force Flexibility 1.



## Storm Force Flexibility 3

Now that you are warming up and cooling down properly, and are using breaks in your day to maintain good posture, it's time to think about planning specific flexibility sessions into your week.

The problem with the processes of Storm Force Flexibility 1 and 2 are that the methods will do very little to *improve* your flexibility. They are designed more as an injury prevention approach to daily life. If you want to actually make improvements to your body's biomechanics and movement potential you need to progress to Storm Force Flexibility 3.

You now need to actually take time to relax into stretches which will have significant physical and mental benefits helping you to optimise your training time and the recovery periods between sessions. You must now try to 'book in' a total of 1 hour of flexibility work into your week.

This might sound a lot but be open-minded! This can be done in 4 x 15 minutes blocks, 2 x 30 minute blocks or whatever timings suit your schedule. It can be done at home, in the gym, in the garden, in a hotel room or anywhere else with enough space to spread out!

Follow these guidelines and you will soon notice considerable improvements in your flexibility, your ability to recover from tough training sessions and your overall wellbeing.

### **Post workout shower**

When you have just finished training, your muscles are full of the waste products such as lactic acid which are an unavoidable side effect of intense exercise.

In order to optimise the recovery process you need to flush out these waste products by using what is termed 'contrast bathing'. We've all heard of professional athletes using ice baths. There are a variety of ways to perform contrast bathing but the most practical in an everyday setting is the use of the temperature dial on the shower.

It's not the most pleasant experience (although some do in fact learn to love the sensation...) but it will bring great benefits to your recovery process and leave you feeling invigorated. The basic science behind it is that the cold water will cause your blood vessels to get smaller, restricting the blood flow. When you turn the heat back up the effect is a surge of blood flow flushing out the waste products which have built up.

To take advantage of contrast bathing, turn the shower as cold as it will go for around 30 seconds and practice slowing your breathing down and not panicking at the cold! You



will find that the more you can control your breathing, the more you can tolerate the temperature changes as you will be more relaxed! This signals to your body that there is no need to seize up as a defence mechanism!

After 30 seconds, turn the shower back to warm and enjoy the experience for 1-2 minutes.

Repeat this 3-5 times.

Don't forget to wash off all the sweat as well or you could get a bad reputation at the gym...

### **Relaxed stretching**

Many of the commonly held views on stretching just don't make sense when you take time to think about them.

Pavel Tsatsouline is a world-renowned strength and conditioning coach famous for bringing kettlebell training out of Russia into mainstream fitness. In his book, *Relax in to Stretch*, he makes a point about flexibility which makes you realise that traditional perspectives on what flexibility is, and how to improve it, are inaccurate at best!

Tsatsouline questions why if a person can lift their right leg sideways up to the level of their waist, and then separately lift their left leg to the same height, why can't they do the a side split (sit on the floor with both legs straight and out to the side)?

It is not solely down to muscle length because it is the nervous system which controls what are muscles are 'allowed' to do. As Tsatsouline rightly points out, there are no muscles which run from one leg to the other so in that respect they are completely separate. Thus if both legs can get to the necessary level on their own something other than muscle length must be happening!

*Why does this happen?*

Your nervous system is controlled by your brain and involves various processes which are designed to prevent you from hurting yourself by overstretching muscles or trying to do things your body doesn't *think* you aren't capable of.

If your brain senses that one of your muscles is being taken to a dangerous length through overstretching, it reacts to prevent whatever movement is occurring. It is this reaction which is called the 'stretch reflex' and makes you think you can't stretch any further.

The reason people appear much more flexible is because those individuals have trained their bodies to relax when stretching and teach their bodies that the stretch is okay and



safe! Once they are able to teach their body to perform this way in their stretching sessions it soon carries over to everyday movement and sporting performances.

Those people who sit at desks all day teach their bodies that the standard muscle length for certain muscles is much shorter than preferable (we discussed the effects on muscle length in Storm Force Flexibility 2). Thus when it comes to flexibility (either as part of a stretching session or when performing dynamic movements during exercise), their bodies perceive much greater danger than those people who are better trained. Consequently they have poor flexibility putting them at risk of other injuries when exercising or performing daily activities.

*So how do you improve your flexibility through relaxed stretching?*

When you move any muscle to the point at which you feel you can stretch no more, your body reacts by contracting that muscle to prevent further stretching due to the perception of impending injury. However, with many stretches, if you hold the stretch for long enough the muscle will eventually tire so much that it has no other option but to relax. As you practice relaxed stretching methods you will become increasingly aware of when this occurs.

There are certain keys to relaxed stretching which you must understand and practice to get the most out of your flexibility work:

1. Breathe deeply in and out through your nose whilst holding stretches. As previously mentioned the more you can control your breathing the more you will relax mentally. If you cannot relax mentally you will not relax physically thus reducing the effectiveness of your flexibility work.
2. It is most effective with stretches which involve comfortable positions. Again this relates to the level of relaxation you can achieve. Tsatsoulina reinforces the idea of feeling safe during stretching. If you don't feel safe, you will find it impossible to switch off the defence mechanisms which are preventing you from increasing the stretch on the muscle in question.

For this reason, whichever stretch you are attempting to perform, make sure you use any supports you need to make yourself feel in control and safe whilst performing the stretch. This can be a chair or table to hold on to, a dumbbell or kettlebell in the gym or anything else you can find which enables you to maintain good technique and relax as much as possible.

3. Distraction techniques can be particularly effective in switching off the defence mechanisms used by your nervous system. Relaxing music, strong visualisation of the muscles relaxing, imagining warmth around the muscle in question or talking to a partner can help distract you from the internal fear that the stretch is going to



hurt you. Like slow, steady breathing, such techniques take a while to master so the more you practice the faster you will see results!

4. Both Tsatsouline<sup>3</sup> and Mel Siff<sup>4</sup>, another of the world's top strength and conditioning experts, report that there is a strong link between relaxation in the hands and face and overall body tension.

If you are grimacing and clenching your fists, you will be working against yourself and maintaining the nervous links which are preventing further stretch in the muscle. Relax!

When performing Storm Force Fitness relaxed stretching, keep checking to ensure your hands and face are as relaxed as possible. It won't make you look any better but it should make you more flexible....

5. Relaxation doesn't occur in 20 or 30 seconds so be prepared to wait for a few minutes in some cases! This particularly applies to what are known as postural muscles. Postural muscles are those which maintain our upright position throughout the day as oppose to phasic muscles which are called into play for particular movements. This particularly applies to the chest and back muscles and some of the hip flexors. Take time to wait for them to relax.

There are no set timings for each stretch. The required times to wait for relaxation will differ between muscles and between individuals. Take time to learn about yourself and make notes as necessary so you remember what worked last time.

6. For the reasons mentioned above, these sessions must be about relaxation and you should not be in a hurry to get them done because you will find it impossible to relax as required. It is therefore best to perform Storm Force Fitness relaxed stretching at the end of the day or at weekends when you are not under the time pressures of daily life.
7. Perform deloading of your spine before performing hip flexor stretches. This is best done by hanging from a beam or pull up bar in the gym but for those lacking the grip strength, it can be performed by sitting down then lifting your bum off the chair for 5-10 seconds and repeating 10 times. If you try to stretch your hip flexors before deloading your spine you risk issues with the discs in your spine as they are in a compressed state as gravity takes it toll throughout the day. Take the time to 'deload' and allow the discs to refill with fluid. Then enjoy the stretching!

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<sup>3</sup> Tsatsouline, P (2002) *Relax into stretch*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

<sup>4</sup> Siff, M (2003) *Supertraining*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition



Every individual will have different flexibility requirements so you can choose which stretches are most important to you (but not just the ones you like!). Obviously if you can take a balanced approach and perform all the stretches it will make more difference to your posture and movement capabilities, however if you don't have much time, refer back to the Storm Force Flexibility 2 and refresh what you are most likely to need to work on due to your office lifestyle.

- Find the point in the stretch where you feel the stretch – it should be mildly uncomfortable but not actually hurting.
- Once you are in position and can feel the stretch in the right areas, just sit it out and wait!
- You might be able to increase the stretch in as little as 30 seconds or it may take a couple of minutes. There is no hard and fast rule for the timings so don't look for one!

Remember make yourself feel as safe in the stretch as possible.

Some stretches will differ to those used in Storm Force Flexibility 2 if they are not comfortable to stay in for long enough to have an effect. Some have been added as it is assumed you now have better control and awareness of your body and so are better able to perform more advanced stretches.

*Step calf stretch*



*Downward Dog calf stretch*

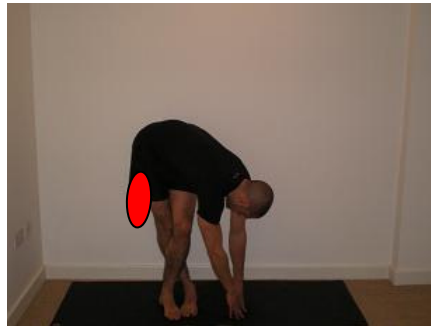




*Hamstring stretch*



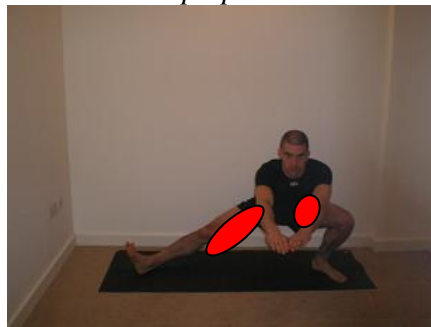
*IT Band stretch*

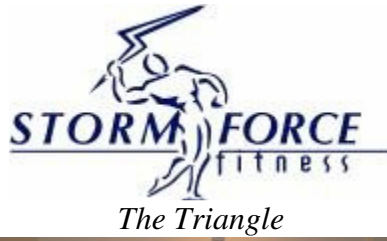


*Hip flexor stretch*

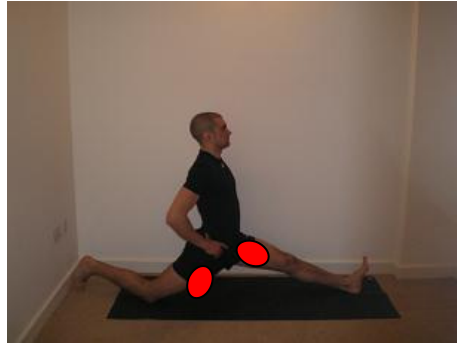


*Hip opener*

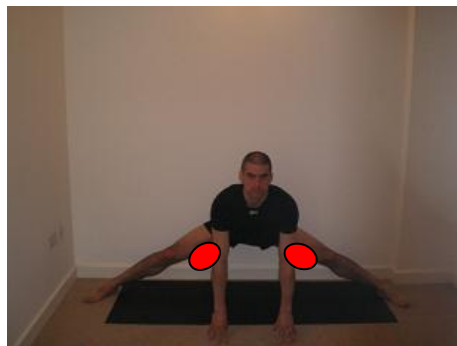
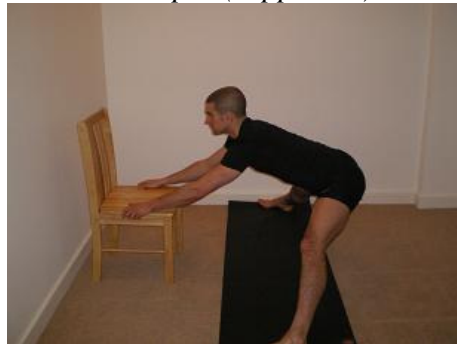




*Front split (supported)*

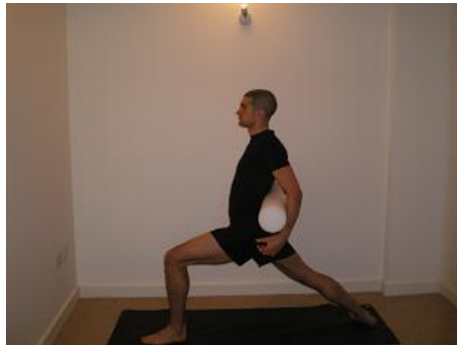
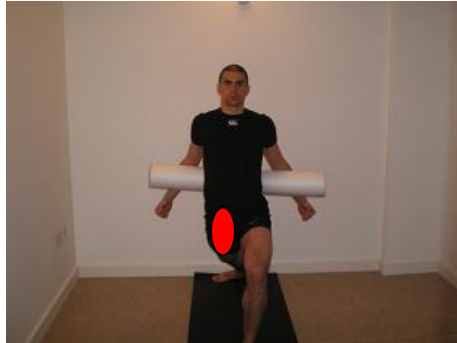


*Side split (supported)*

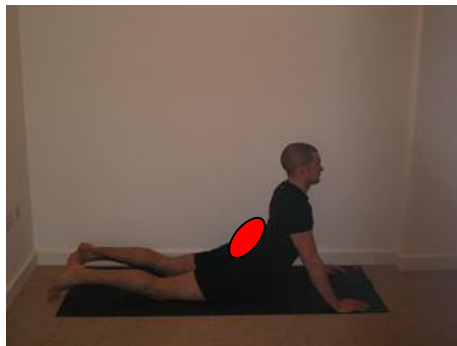




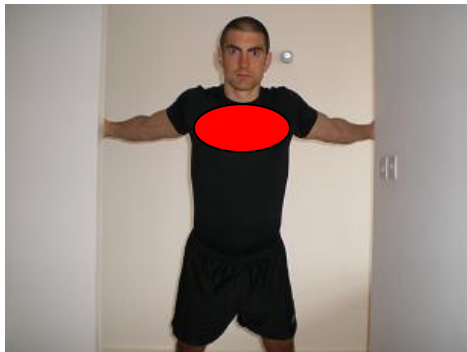
*Groin lunge stretch*



*The Cobra*



*Chest door stretch*

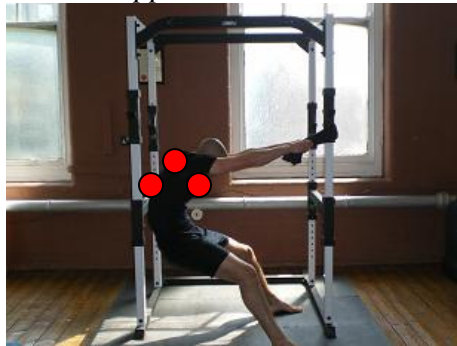




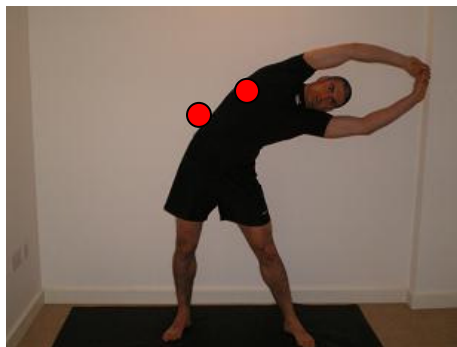
*Upper body opener*



*Upper back stretch*



*Side stretch*





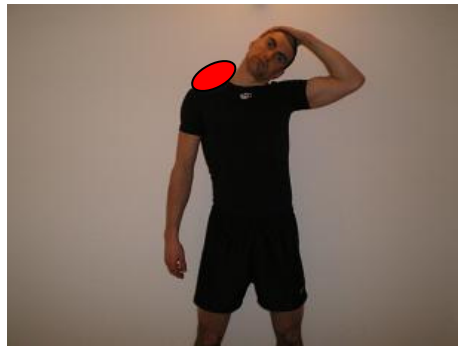
*Shoulder towel stretch*



*Neck stretch #1*



*Neck stretch #2*



## **Conclusion**

This brings us to the end of Storm Force Flexibility 3. You should be seeing excellent gains in your functional flexibility but if you want to step things up a gear and find out how to accelerate the process, register at <http://www.stormforcefitness.com> to get on to Forces 4 and 5!

***[www.stormforcefitness.com](http://www.stormforcefitness.com)***