



Warm Up and Cool Down

Warm Up

Generally, there are two stages of warm up:

1. Warm up on the shore
2. Warm up on the water (in kayak)

A warm up period is the first part of every training session or preparation for competition. The warm up starts slowly and progresses gradually, involving all muscles and body parts. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, warming up also has several physiological benefits.

All parts of a kayaker's body need to be warmed-up, however, most important is the upper body, as the upper body will do the most work.

The importance of a warm up prior to exercise cannot be overstressed. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments, and the cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

Warming Up:

- Raises body temperature
- Increases metabolic rate
- Increases heart and respiratory rate
- Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise

Warm ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The total warm up period takes at least 25 minutes and immediately precedes the training or competition. A warm up period will include the following basic sequence and components.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic walk/fast walk/run	Warms up heart muscles	5 minutes
Stretching	Increase range of movement	10 minutes
Event Specific Drills	Coordination preparation for training/competition	10 minutes

Aerobic Warm-Up

Activities such as walking, light jogging, walking while doing arm circles, jumping jacks.

Walking

Walking is the most basic warm up activity, but should be the first exercise of an athlete's routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by walking slowly for three to five minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The sole objective of the warm up is to circulate the blood and warm the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.

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Running

Running is the next exercise in an athlete’s routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by running slowly for three to five minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The run starts out slowly, and then gradually increases in speed; however, the athlete should never reach more than 50 percent of their maximum effort by the end of the run. Remember, the sole objective of this phase of the warm up is circulating the blood and warming the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity—and should not tire out the athlete before training or competition.

Stretching

Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the warm up and can directly impact an athlete’s performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury. Please refer to the Stretching section for more in depth information.

Event Specific Drills

Drills are activities designed to teach sport skills. Progressions of learning start at a low ability level, advance to an intermediate level, and finally, reach a high ability level. Encourage each athlete to advance to their highest possible level. Drills can be combined with warm-up and lead into specific skill development.

Skills are taught and reinforced through repetition of a small segment of the skill to be performed. Many times, the actions are exaggerated in order to strengthen the muscles that perform the skill. Each coaching session should take the athlete through the entire progression so that he or she is exposed to all of the skills that make up an event.

Specific Warm Up Activities

- More exercises with arms than in other sports.
- Walking through the techniques with and without the paddle.
- Paddling to the given destination (e.g. start line) is not only a part of training and competition but part of kayaking warm up as well.

Hips Warm-Up





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Shoulder Warm-Up



Warm-Up Exercises in the Kayak



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The Cool Down

The cool down is as important as the warm up, however is often ignored. Stopping an activity abruptly may cause pooling of the blood and slow the removal of waste products in the athlete's body. It may also cause cramps, soreness, and other problems for Special Olympics athletes. The cool down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. The cool down is also a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the session or competition. Note that cool down is also a good time to do stretching. Muscles are warm and receptive to stretching movements.

The cool down should begin just after kayakers have finished their fast paddling. The main part of the training session or race should transition into cool down by paddling a given distance with little effort. This cool down activity can replace walk or jog. After the cool down, light stretching is strongly recommended.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic paddling	Lowers body temperature Gradually lowers heart rate	5 minutes
Light stretching	Removes waste from muscles	5 minutes



Stretching

Flexibility is critical to an athlete's optimal performance in both training and competition. Flexibility is achieved through stretching. Stretching follows an easy aerobic jog at the start of a training session or competition.

Have athletes begin with an easy stretch to the point of tension, and hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds until the pull lessens. When the tension eases, slowly move further into the stretch until tension is again felt. Athletes should hold this new position for an additional 15 seconds. Each stretch should be repeated four to five times on each side of the body.

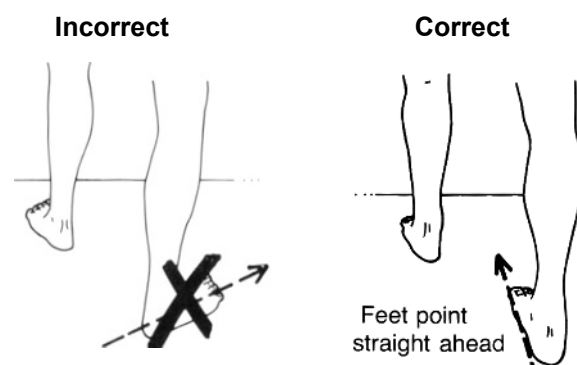
It is also important to continue to breathe while stretching. As athletes lean into the stretch, have them exhale. Once the stretching point is reached, have them continue inhaling and exhaling while holding the stretch. Stretching should be a part of everyone's daily routine. Regular, daily stretching has been demonstrated to have the following effects:

1. Increases the length of the muscle-tendon unit
2. Increases joint range of motion
3. Reduces muscle tension
4. Develops body awareness
5. Promotes increased circulation
6. Makes you feel good

Some athletes, like those with Down Syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear more flexible. Be careful to not allow these athletes to stretch beyond a normal, safe range. Several stretches are dangerous to perform for all athletes, and should never be part of a safe stretching program. These unsafe stretches include the following

- Neck Backward Bending
- Trunk Backward Bending
- Spinal Roll

Stretching is effective only if the stretch is performed accurately. Athletes need to focus on correct body positioning and alignment. Take the calf stretch for example. Many athletes do not keep the feet forward, in the direction that they are running.





Another common fault in stretching is bending the back in an attempt to get a better stretch from the hips. An example is a simple sitting forward leg stretch.

Incorrect



Correct



In this portion of the guide, we will focus on some basic stretches for major muscle groups. Along the way we will also point out some common faults, illustrate corrections and identify stretches that are more event specific. We will start at the top of the body and work our way to the legs and feet.



Upper Body

Chest Opener



Clasp hands behind back.
Palms facing in.
Push hands towards sky.

Side Stretch



Raise arms over head.
Clasp forearms.
Bend to one side.

Side Arm Stretch



Raise arms over head.
Clasp hands, palms up.
Push hands toward sky.
If the athlete is unable to clasp their hands, they can still get a good stretch by pushing their hands to the sky.

Trunk Twist



Stand with back to wall.
Turn, reach palms to wall.

Elements of a safe and successful practice

- Check area for safety hazards
- Warmup
- Stretching
- Skills practice
- Competitive/fun session
- Cool down
- Wrap-up and conclusion
- HYDRATE!!!
- *Elements can be added and subtracted, as desired*

1 hour practice plan example

- 8:30-8:55 – Coach arrives and checks area for safety hazards.
- 8:55-9:00 – Walking or jogging to warm-up muscles.
- 9:00-9:10 – Stretching
- 9:10-9:25 – Skills practice
- 9:25-9:30 – Water break
- 9:30-9:40 – Skill practice
- 9:40-9:50 – Competitive/fun session
- 9:50-9:55 – Cool down
- 9:55-10:00 – Wrap-up and conclusion