



# Coaching Intermediate Flexibility

**Aim to stretch before and after each training session for at least 10-15 minutes to maintain your current flexibility. To make gains, you will have to do extra stretching sessions.**

**Don't force the stretch – you should feel a mild pulling but not pain. A common mistake is to be too aggressive which actually causes the muscles to tighten as they try to protect from tearing rather than lengthening. Hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds and do 2-3 each side.**

## Groin/Hip Flex combined

**Aims:** Flexibility at the front of the hip/hip flexors.  
**Method:** Lean into the front leg, pushing the hip forward.  
**Faults:** Make sure you don't arch your lower back.  
**Tips:** Good stretch for both groin and hip flexors.



## Cat stretch in kneeling

**Aims:** Hip flexion stretch/gluteal stretch/thoracic spine stretch.



**Method:** Start in neutral position on all fours. Tuck tailbone under and bring bum towards heels. Stretch hands out in front.

**Faults:** Allowing too much bend in the low back.

**Tips:** Make sure the thigh to chest angle is not achieved by not bending the lower back.



## All fours rotation stretch

**Aims:** Thoracic spine rotation/shoulder stability.

**Method:** Start in neutral.



Lift one arm back towards roof and rotate through thoracic spine. Hold for 10 seconds.



Then bring hand through supporting arm, keeping palm upwards. Keep the supporting arm straight.



Follow the moving hand with your head/eyes.

Hold for 10 seconds.

Return to start position and repeat.

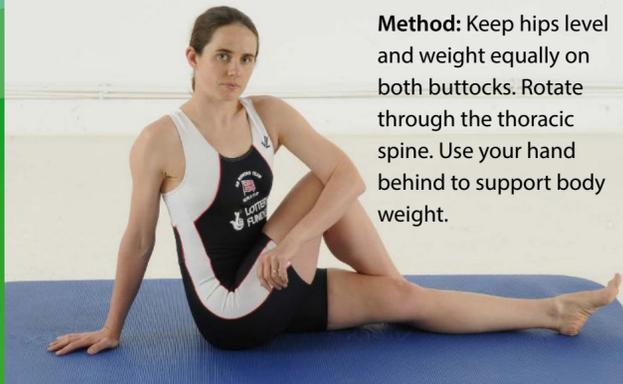
**Faults:** Not holding the scapula/shoulder blade correctly.

**Tips:** This is a spinal stretch not a shoulder stretch so look where the forces are being delivered.

## Gluteal stretch in rotation long sitting

**Aims:** Gluteal/butt stretch.

**Method:** Keep hips level and weight equally on both buttocks. Rotate through the thoracic spine. Use your hand behind to support body weight.



**Faults:** Allowing the back to collapse.  
**Tips:** This is a stretch for the gluteals not the back so the majority of the stretch should be felt in the buttock – not twisting the back.

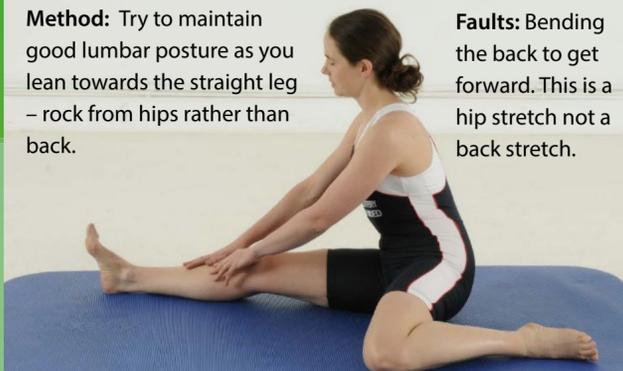


## Hurdlers

**Aims:** Medial rotation at the hip joint.

**Method:** Try to maintain good lumbar posture as you lean towards the straight leg – rock from hips rather than back.

**Faults:** Bending the back to get forward. This is a hip stretch not a back stretch.



**Tips:** The angle of the knee is important. Less than 90° makes the position easier, 90° or more makes it more difficult.

## Piriformis

**Aims:** Buttock and hip stretch.

**Method:** Bend knee and place opposite ankle across knee so you are in a 'figure of 4' position. Using both hands underneath your knee, pull leg towards you without twisting at the pelvis.

**Faults:** Bending the back to get forward. This is a hip stretch not a back stretch.



**Faults:** Don't let your low back flatten into the mat – maintain neutral spinal position.

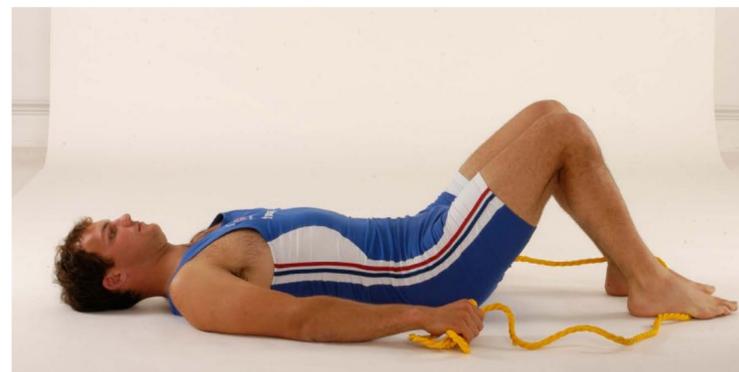
**Tips:** Sometimes the back bends during this stretch.

## Hamstring Stretch

**Aims:** Lengthening of the hamstring muscles.

**Method:** Bend knee to 90°. Use a belt, boat tie or rubber band to gently extend knee.

**Faults:** Letting the back bend therefore stretching it rather than the back and not lengthening the hamstrings.



**Tips:** Pelvis should not move i.e. stay in neutral spinal position. Instead of a rope can be done up the side of a door.



# Intermediate Stability

## Ergo tied off at catch

**Aims:** To achieve the correct biomechanical sequencing and power delivery from the handle to the footplate at the point of the catch.

**Method:** Tie off the ergometer chain/handle at the point at which a correct catch position can be achieved (check with your coach).

With lower abdominal hold and gluteal activation, press through the feet while holding on to the handle.



Photographer: Iain Weir

The pressure should allow the transfer of load through to the feet causing the buttocks to rise off the ergometer seat.

**Faults:** Not engaging either or both of the gluteals or lower abdominals prior to pressing through the legs, not breathing, letting the low back bend or letting the pelvis shift i.e. bum shoving.

**Tips:** Make sure the set position is achieved and that the lower abdominals and gluteals are engaged.

## Bridging single leg raising

**Aims:** To enhance gluteal control and stability around the pelvis.

**Method:** Lie on your back with both feet on the floor, knees bent. Ensure your palms are facing up to stop excessive stress through the shoulders. Engage the lower abdominals and the gluteals. Focus on breathing control throughout.



Press through the feet and raise the pelvis off the bed utilising the gluteal power. Once the pelvis is off the ground – check there is correct mid point positioning by reviewing the straight line between the knee and the arm pit.



To make the exercise more difficult, straighten one leg. In the process the hip of the straightening leg should not drop.



The pelvis should not alter position or twist.

**Faults:** The thoracic spine lifts the pelvis not the pelvis lifting the spine. When the leg is straightened the pelvis tilts or the abdominals begin to falter and are not assisting the exercise.

**Tips:** Done slowly, do not over extend in the thoracic region, watch for any drift or collapse at the pelvis which should remain stationary and level throughout the movement.

## Gluteal abduction in side lying

**Aims:** To enhance control of the gluteals.

**Method:** Lie on your side knee bent for comfort. The top leg is straight. The pelvis is in neutral. Engage the lower abdominals and the gluteals. Slowly lift the thigh so that the movement takes place within the hip joint and not at the low back. Hold at the top of the movement then lower slowly.

**Faults:** Lifting the thigh with a movement that includes lifting or shifting the pelvis and moving the back.

**Tips:** Place your hand on the uppermost aspect of the pelvis to monitor movement.



## Abdominal single leg straightening

**Aims:** To enhance control of the abdominals, especially the lower abdominals.

**Method:** Begin with the knees bent and the feet flat on the floor. Initiate lower abdominal and pelvic floor contraction with the pelvis in a neutral spinal position. Raise one thigh so the hip is at 90° and then the other without losing the abdominal control and the pelvis position. From this position of both hips at 90° slowly straighten one leg with the aim that it becomes parallel to the floor. Slowly return this leg to the hip 90° position then slowly straighten the other leg as previous.

**Faults:** Not breathing throughout the movement, letting the pelvis move therefore arching the back, trying to go too quickly.

**Tips:** This is an exercise to be done slowly and therefore the greatest demand is one of control.



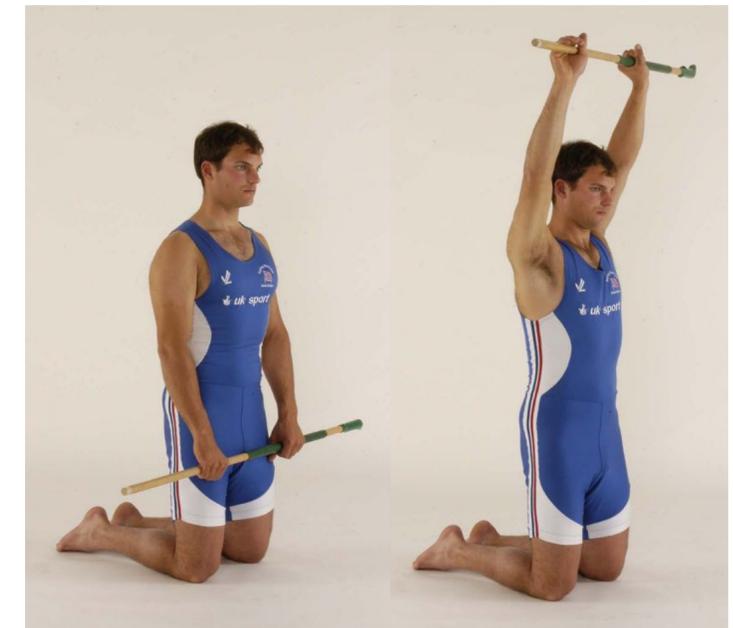
## Kneeling shoulder stretch with stick

**Aims:** To achieve thoracic extension (can add rotation) as an isolated posture.

**Method:** High kneeling. Grip a stick in both hands. Lift the stick with straight arms to an elevated position. Continue moving the stick past the vertical and backwards to achieve thoracic extension, or rotation.

**Faults:** Too much lumbar extension, poor balance.

**Tips:** Rowers spend a lot of their time in thoracic flexion and this may be one factor in the development of rib or chest wall stress responses. Thoracic mobility has been indicated to help reduce the incidence.



## Abdominal curl downs

**Aims:** To enhance eccentric loading of the abdominals. This is a downward going controlling exercise.

**Method:** Begin sitting up with the pelvis rocked as far forward as possible with arms outstretched.



In a gentle and slow movement, roll the pelvis backwards.



Control the roll downwards to the floor slowly uncurling as each individual vertebra reaches the floor. Return to the starting position by curling upwards.



**Faults:** Done too quickly, done with jerking movements, done with the feet coming off the floor or the feet anchored down.

**Tips:** Breathing control is essential. Complete very slowly for correctness.

# Intermediate Strengthening

## Plank



**Aims:** To enhance lower abdominal control with correct scapula/shoulder positioning.

**Method:** Hands shoulder width apart. On elbows – make a straight line between the shoulders and the feet. To achieve this engage the abdominals, quads and shoulder muscles.

**Faults:** The hands are clasped together, the scapula are seen to wing upwards, the tummy drops down.

**Tips:** Good for abdominal control, breathing control.

## Press up on ball



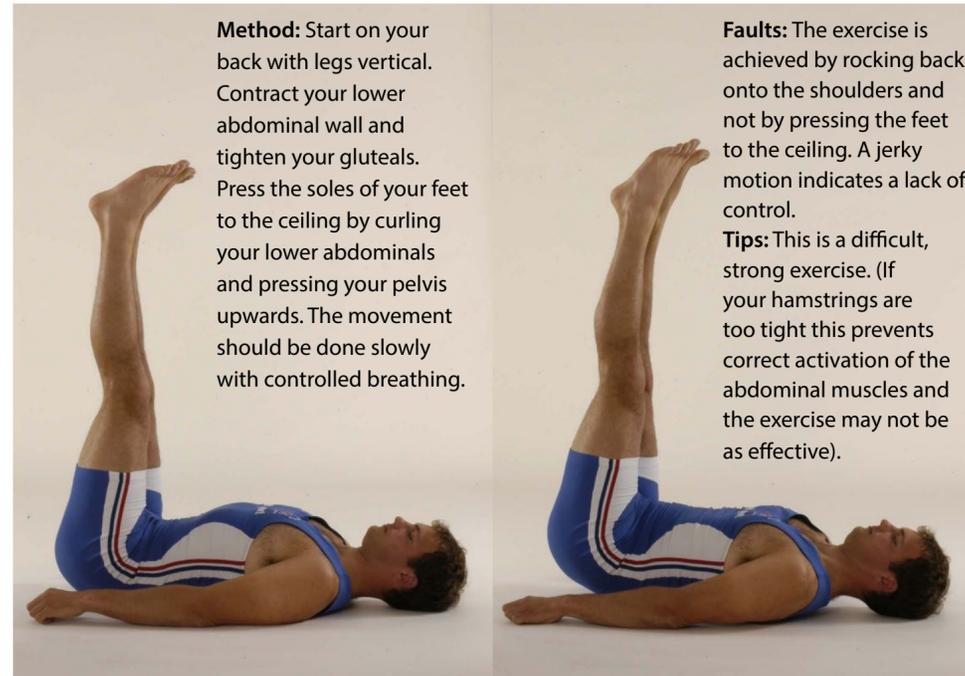
**Aims:** To develop shoulder/scapula control through movement on an uneven or unbalanced platform.

**Method:** On knees (or more advanced on toes) hands shoulder width apart, do a press up making sure the line from the shoulders to the knees (or feet) is not lost. You must have good abdominal control and good scapula/shoulder control.

**Faults:** Scapula wing, knees buckle, abdominal area collapses and can be seen if the back curves inwards.

**Tips:** More difficult if done slowly. Controlled breathing is essential.

## Reverse curls **Aims:** Difficult exercise for the lower abdominal wall.



**Method:** Start on your back with legs vertical. Contract your lower abdominal wall and tighten your gluteals. Press the soles of your feet to the ceiling by curling your lower abdominals and pressing your pelvis upwards. The movement should be done slowly with controlled breathing.

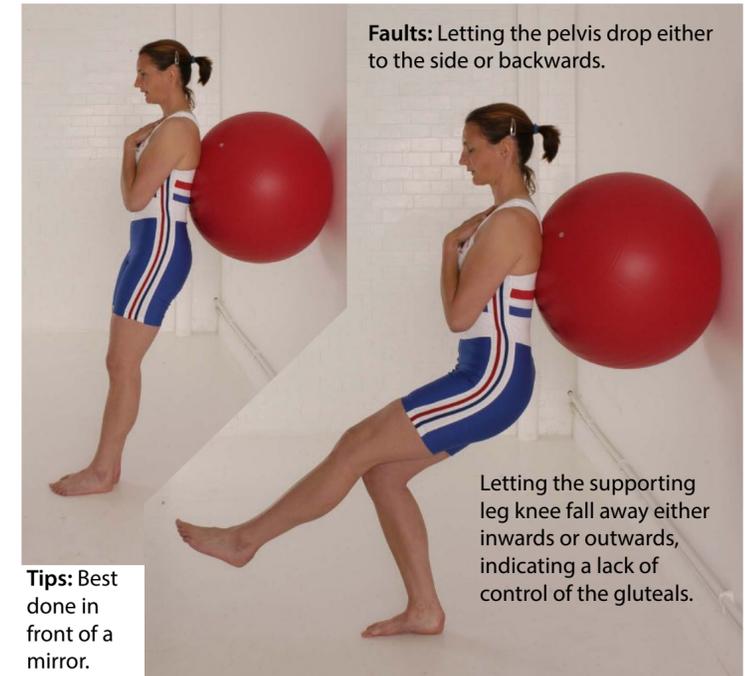
**Faults:** The exercise is achieved by rocking back onto the shoulders and not by pressing the feet to the ceiling. A jerky motion indicates a lack of control.  
**Tips:** This is a difficult, strong exercise. (If your hamstrings are too tight this prevents correct activation of the abdominal muscles and the exercise may not be as effective).

## Quads, ball on wall, single leg

**Aims:** Gluteal and quadriceps activation / control.

**Method:** Standing with a gym ball between the lower part of the shoulder blades and the wall. Raise one leg off the ground. Slowly bend the other leg until the supporting leg has reached 90° hold for a period then raise.

The exercise can be done many times on one leg before changing to the other or changing one for one.



**Faults:** Letting the pelvis drop either to the side or backwards.

**Tips:** Best done in front of a mirror.

Letting the supporting leg knee fall away either inwards or outwards, indicating a lack of control of the gluteals.

## Side plank on elbow

**Aims:** To continue with lateral stability utilising the lateral abdominal wall.

**Method:** Lie on your side. Press up into a position holding the posture on the elbow. Do not let the body sag in the middle, drift forward nor backwards. Your head should remain in line with the trunk throughout the exercise. Engage the abdominals and the gluteals throughout.

**Faults:** Letting the body sag in the middle. Not engaging the abdominals and gluteals through the whole exercise. Letting the shoulder sag.



**Tips:** Use the hand and imagine pressing the elbow through the floor.



## Extension over ball with rotation **Aims:** Engaging lower lumbar extensor muscle groups and adding rotation control.



**Method:** Lay on top of a gym ball. Make sure the feet are stable. Raise the shoulders and back upwards.



When at the top of the movement twist to the left then to the right very slowly, whilst maintaining the extended lumbar spine position. Try not to over extend or over contract the upper body.



Keep your breathing relaxed throughout the movement. Return to the mid point, then slowly lower at the completion.

Engaging the lower abdominals and gluts is essential to do this exercise correctly.

**Faults:** Bouncing up on the ball, not breathing, trying too hard and ending up over contracting through the thoracic spine.

**Tips:** Important for initiating the control of the lower back and equally not over engaging the posterior thoracic muscles. The rotation should be done slowly with control throughout the movement.