

SELF

The 5 Most Important Minutes of Your Workout

Want better results? It starts with the perfect warm-up—here's how to do it.



There are probably lots of things that you know are good for you but don't bother doing anyway (see: flossing every day, getting eight hours of sleep every night, etc.). But when it comes to a warm-up before your gym session, you've got no excuse.

“Regardless of your type of workout, a full-body warm-up gets your entire body primed and ready for action,” says Lauren Williams, a head coach at [Tone House in New York City](#), who designed this perfect warm-up plan. This fast, five-minute routine gets your muscles moving so you can work through a bigger range of motion throughout the rest of your workout—meaning you get more out of every exercise—and lowers your chance of injury, too.

The movements below are great to run through before any session, but they're essential before strength training or a run. (If you're getting ready to sweat through a group class, your instructor will likely take you through some heart-rate-revving moves of their own.) So, take five to get fired up with these exercises—then proceed with your regularly scheduled routine.

Leg Swing

Warms up: Your hip flexors and extensors

Stand with left side of body and both feet parallel to a wall and press left hand against the wall for balance. Raise right leg in front of you to hip height, then let it swing backward behind you. Repeat, swinging leg forward and back, gradually increasing the range of motion. Do 15 to 20 reps, then switch sides.

Inchworm

Warms up: Your entire body, especially your core, shoulders and hamstrings

Stand with feet hip-width apart. Bend forward from your hips and reach palms down to touch the floor (bend knees if needed). Walk hands out into a high plank position and hold for 5 seconds, then walk your feet toward your hands, trying to keep your legs as straight as possible. Stand to return to starting position to complete 1 rep. Do 8 to 10 reps.

Hip Stretch With Rotation

Warms up: Your hips, thoracic spine (upper back) and chest

Start in a high plank position, then step right foot outside of the right hand so you are in a deep lunge. Keeping the left palm flat on the floor, reach right hand to the ceiling, twisting your torso to the right. Hold for a few seconds, then place right palm on floor and step right foot back to starting position. Repeat on opposite side to complete 1 rep. Do 8 to 10 reps.

Plank to Downward Dog

Warms up: Your shoulders and core

Start in a high plank position, then shift hips upward into downward dog. Hold, keeping hips lifted toward the ceiling and heels trying to touch the floor, then lower to return to plank. Hold the plank for a few seconds each rep or add a push-up. Do 8 to 10 reps.

Butt Kicker

Warms up: Your lower body, especially your quads

Jog lightly in place, kicking your feet up behind you. Gradually increase range of motion until your heels are tapping your butt. Continue for 1 minute.

*To keep the warm-up feeling fresh each time you train, change up the order of the above exercises.