



US Soccer Referee's Fitness



Warm Up Advice

There has been a lot of research done to show the positive effects a good warm up can have on an athlete's performance. If done correctly, an effective warm up can not only prepare your body for high intensity activities and decrease your chance of injury, it can also help prepare your mind for the game to come. I suggest a three part warm up, including the following phases: aerobic warm up, dynamic flexibility, and field specific movements.

Phase 1

The goal of the first phase is to increase the muscle temperature within the body, through aerobic activity. Sweating is a good indication of muscle temperature. Do not start any type of dynamic stretching before you are significantly sweating. Throughout this phase, the intensity level should be gradually increased over many minutes. This will take the athletes from a state of rest to a state of moderate activity level. Throughout the next few stages the athlete will begin to move even faster and increase their range of motion until they have progressed to the highest intensity level.

Phase 2

The second phase in this warm up is dynamic stretching, also known as active stretching. Dynamic stretching is done by moving specific body segments through their range of motion, while progressively increasing the intensity and speed of the movement. This continuous movement, throughout the muscle's range of motion, allows individuals to increase flexibility in the same movement patterns that be performed on the pitch. In contrast, research has shown that static stretching will decrease individual's explosive power and increase the chance of muscle injury.

Phase 3

The final phase of the warm up is intended to bridge the gap from flexibility and aerobics activity to the game specific movements that are critical to your performance. These movement drills should be specific to your particular job on the field. Although I will suggest some specific drills below, I encourage officials to take ownership of this phase and focus on the specific movements that they deem most critical to their style of officiating.

Mental Warm Up

Establishing a good warm up habit for yourself is an important step in standardizing your training procedures. During both training sessions and matches, many things will be out of your control and could have a negative impact on your performance. Sport physiologists teach athletes to take what is within their control and standardize it as much as possible. Athletes will have more self confidence during difficult situations, by taking control of these situations. Your pre-match/workout preparation is a great example of an area that can be controlled by the athletes, to create positive self confidence. Furthermore, the warm up period is a great time to reflect on the task at hand, and visualize a positive outcome. Remember, nothing negative ever happened by having a positive outlook on a situation.

Getting Started

Below I have provided three sets of warm up plans, one for general use and one for both referees and assistant referees. As you begin to change your warm up procedures, you may experience some soreness and fatigue. This is a typical response to learning and performing new activities. I would suggest starting when you have a few weeks in-between critical games. Although this may feel like a workout at first, over time these exercises will get easier and eventually become intuitive. The bottom portion of this document will explain many of the dynamic flexibility drills. Please make sure you are performing each drill appropriately in order to prevent injuries. I encourage athletes to take the philosophies established in this document and modify the procedures to best fit their personal needs. Once you have established a personal warm up of your choice, make sure to perform this warm up before every workout and match.



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Referees Dynamic Warm Up (20min.)

1. Aerobic warm up (8 to 10min. total time CONTINUOUS)

3-5min. easy jogging on the field, building up in intensity to a vigorous jog.

50m Backward runs (Easy) + 50m Forward run (Easy)

25m Side slide right (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

50m Backward runs (Easy) + 50m Forward run (Easy)

25m Side slide left (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

25m Backward run (Moderate Pace) + 25m easy jogging

25m Forward run (Moderate Pace) + 25m easy jogging



2. Dynamic stretching activities (5 to 8min. total time)

Walking knee to Chest (3-5 each leg)

Walking hip cradle (3-5 each leg)

Forward lunge + Hamstring (3-5 each leg)

Extended lateral lunge (3-5 each side)

Jogging Hip Outs and Hip Ins (20m each)

Walking leg swings (5 each leg)

Dynamic Calf Stretch + Easy Ankle Skipping (a few each leg)

Eagles (Hip Rotations) (5 each leg)



3. Field specific movements (5-8 min. total time)

Run 50 meters, at 65-70% maximum pace – then easy jog back

Run 50 meters, at 75-80% maximum pace – then easy jog back

As you work your way across the pitch, start by Jogging 4-5 steps, then plant on the outside leg and cut to change direction. Accelerate and sprint 5-7 steps at high speed (85% maximum pace) before you decelerate. Continue to repeat, while switching cutting direction, for about 50m.

Run forward at a moderate pace for 15meters. Then, quickly change directions and run backwards quickly for approximately 5meters. Next, push off forward at an easy running pace. Keep repeating the drill running forwards and backwards for approximately 50m, followed by an easy jog back. Perform any additional warm up drills you feel necessary.





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Assistant Referees Dynamic Warm Up (20min.)

1. Aerobic warm up (8 to 10min. total time CONTINUOUS)

3-5min. easy jogging on the field, building up in intensity to a vigorous jog.

25m Backward runs (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

25m Side slide right (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

25m Side slide left (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

25m Backward runs (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

25m Karaoke right (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

25m Karaoke left (Easy) + 25m Forward run (Easy)

25m Forward run (Moderate Pace) + 25m easy jogging X2



2. Dynamic stretching activities (5 to 8min. total time)

Walking knee to Chest (3-5 each leg)

Walking hip cradle (3-5 each leg)

Forward lunge + Hamstring (3-5 each leg)

Extended lateral lunge (3-5 each side)

Jogging Hip Outs and Hip Ins (20m each)

Walking leg swings (5 each leg)

Dynamic Calf Stretch + Easy Ankle Skipping (a few each leg)

Eagles (Hip Rotations) (5 each leg)



3. Field specific movements (5-8 min. total time)

Run 50 meters, at 65-70% maximum pace – then easy jog back

Run 50 meters, at 75-80% maximum pace – then easy jog back

Working your way across the pitch, start by jogging 4-5 steps, then plant on the outside leg and cut to change direction. Accelerate and sprint 5-7 steps at high speed (85% maximum pace) before you decelerate. Continue to repeat while switching cutting direction for about 50m.

Start by side sliding in either direction for 4-5 strides, then perform a quick cross over step and accelerate forwards at high speed (85% maximum sprint), following an easy slow down. The drill will be performed again while sliding to the other direction. Continue the drill for about 50meters. Jog back easily and perform any additional warm up drills you feel necessary.





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General Dynamic Warm Up (15min.)

1. Aerobic warm up (5 to 8min. total time)

3-5min. easy jogging on the field, building up in intensity to a vigorous jog.

3-5min. moderate field movement; alternate between forward jog, backward jog, side slide, karaoke, and easy skipping. Nothing should be done aggressive or fast. The goal is to increase the muscle temperature and take the body from resting to sweating.



2. Dynamic stretching activities (5 to 8min. total time)

Walking knee to chest (3-5 each leg)

Walking hip cradle (3-5 each leg)

Inchworms (5 each)

Forward lunge +back extension (3-5 each leg)

Extended lateral lunge (3-5 each side)

Jogging hip outs and Hip Ins (20m each)

Stationary leg swings *front to back and side to side* (5 each leg)

Dynamic Calf Stretch (a few each leg)



3. Field specific movements (5-8 min. total time)

Run 30 meters, at 65-70% maximum pace – then easy jog back

Run 30 meters, at 75-80% maximum pace – then easy jog back

Working your way across the pitch, start by jogging 4-5 steps, then plant on the outside leg and cut to change direction. Accelerate and sprint 5-7 steps at high speed (85% maximum pace) before you decelerate. Continue to repeat while switching cutting direction for about 50m.

Referees

Run forward at a moderate pace for 15meters. Then quickly change directions and run backwards quickly for approximately 5meters. Next, push off forward at an easy running pace. Keep repeating the drill, running forwards and backwards, for approximately 50m, followed by an easy jog back. Perform any additional warm up drills you feel necessary.

Assistant Referees

Start by side sliding in either direction for 4-5 strides, then perform a quick cross over step and accelerate forward at high speed (85% maximum sprint), following an easy slow down. The drill will be performed again while sliding in the other direction. Continue the drill for about 50meters. Jog back easily and perform any additional warm up drills you feel necessary.





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Hip Outs

Walk or jog easily, stopping periodically to lift your knee to the 90 degree position and **rotate your hip outwards**. Alternate between left and right legs while maintaining a consistent pace. This exercise is great for warming up and increasing flexibility in your hip flexors and groin region.



Hip Ins

Much like the Hip Out exercise, this exercise is also great for warming up and increasing flexibility in your hip flexors and groin region. To perform this exercise, walk or jog easily, periodically stopping to lift your knee up to the 90 degree position and **rotate your hip outwards**. Alternate between your left and right legs, maintaining a consistent pace, until flexibility is increased.



Inchworms

Inchworms are one of the best warm up and cool down drills available. This exercise will stretch your calves, hamstrings and lower back muscles. Start by reaching down to the pitch with both hands. While keeping your legs straight, walk your hands out until your body is in a straight line from your feet to your shoulders. Next, slowly pop your calves, walking your feet towards your hands, while continuing to keep your legs straight. Continue walking forward until you reach a full stretch and immediately start again.





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Lunge Back Extension

From a forward walk, take an elongated step, and then slowly lower your body down into a forward lunge position. As you lower yourself down into the lunge position, make sure your front knee does not extend past your front foot, if it does extend your lunge position. Next, reach back over your head with your opposite arm to further elongate your stretched position. Perform the drill on a three count so to alternate between legs. Although not shown, I typical have athletes perform a trunk rotation following the back extension. These can be added in by twisting your opposite shoulder towards your front knee.



Lunge Forearm to Instep

Start by taking an extended forward lunge, while maintaining good posture. As you lower yourself down into the lunge position make sure your front knee does not extend past your front foot, if so extend your lunge position. Next, bend over at the waist and reach your elbow down towards your front foot. Perform the drill on a three count so to alternating between legs.



Front Lunge + Hamstring

Start by taking an extended forward lunge, while maintaining good posture. As you lower yourself down into the lunge position make sure your front knee does not extend past your front foot, if it does, extend your lunge position. While keeping both hands on the ground, extend both legs. Back leg will become straight and you should focus on pushing the heel to the ground to stretch the calf muscle. The front leg may be slightly bent depending on your flexibility- extend as far as possible. As before, perform the drill on a three count so to alternating between legs.



Lunge Forearm to Instep + Hamstring (Advanced)

After you have learned the previous lunge exercises, I suggest combining them to save time and to increase efficiency. Start by performing a typical front lunge forearm to instep then extend up into the front hamstring stretch. This single drill will work the groin, hip flexors, calf, hamstring, etc. I also use a lunge twist into a standing leg cradle as a combination exercise.



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Lateral Lunge:

The lateral lunge is an essential exercise for assistant referees and should be performed regularly. Start by taking an extended stretch to one side and lower yourself down slowly until your thigh gets to a parallel position. Make sure the weight of your body is placed on the heel of your foot; this will help prevent knee problems and is a good cue for any squatting activity. Next, extend back up to the neutral position and perform the same skill on the other side before moving down the line. After a few easy side steps, perform another lateral lunge to both sides.



Walking Leg Swings

Although this exercise is very simple, it is an effective way to dynamically stretch your hamstring muscles and prepare them for explosive movements. As you walk forward, swing a straight leg up to meet your opposite hand, walk a few steps then alternate legs. Start off slowly and progressively increase the intensity of each repetition to avoid injury. Athletes should focus on maintaining good upright posture throughout the entire exercise. Below, the athlete breaks his back leg during the upswing of the front leg, this is incorrect. The athletes should be actively elongating their back leg throughout the exercise, rising up onto the back toe is a sign of good flexibility and coordination.



Fire hydrant

The key word in this exercise is 90 degrees. Starting on all fours, lift one leg to the side of your body, while doing so, make sure the foot, knee and hip are all kept at a 90 degree angle. Extend the bent leg until it is parallel to the ground, then alternate sides.





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Fire hydrant + Extension

Starting on all fours, lift one leg to the side of your body. While doing this, make sure the foot knee and hip are all kept at a 90 degree angle. Next, hold this position while slowly extending the bent leg until it is straight and parallel to the ground. Reverse the steps and perform the exercise on the opposite side.



Dynamic Calf Stretch

Start in a raised bridge position. Move your foot through the full range of motion from heel down to heel up. I do not like to use static stretching in warm up drills because it decreases explosive power and reaction time. The key to this drill is keeping your foot moving continuously through the full range of motion. Following this exercise, I suggest performing an easy ankle skipping exercise. An ankle skip is a skipping drill with little knee lift; the focus is on extending the back foot while pulling the toe of the front foot to your shin bone.



Eagles (Back Rotations)

Starting from the T position on the ground, lift one knee up to a 90 degree position. Next, rotate your leg and hips over to the opposite side which stretches out your lower back muscles. Make sure the straight leg remains long and the shoulders remain on the pitch throughout the entire exercise. Reverse the steps before switching legs. During the game, many different movement pattern are used; backwards, side, forward, etc.. As you transition from one movement to another, a rotation of the hips will occur. Increasing flexibility and strength in the lower back region is critical to maintaining core stability and preventing injuries during these changes in movement.





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Stationary Forward Leg Swings

From a stationary position, swing a straight leg up to meet your opposite hand. Next swing the leg back down in the opposite direction until stretched behind your body. Start off slowly and progressively increase the intensity of each repetition to avoid injury. Athletes should focus on maintaining good upright posture throughout the entire exercise. Do not allow the hips to rotate or the down leg to bend.



Stationary Lateral Leg Swings

From a stationary position, swing a straight leg out to the open side. Next, swing the leg back down in the opposite direction across the middle line of the body, until stretched completely to the opposite side of your body. Start off slowly and progressively increase the intensity of each repetition to avoid injury. Athletes should focus on maintaining good, upright posture throughout the entire exercise.



Over and Back + Hamstring Stretch

The over and back hamstring string stretch combines a back flexibility exercise with the forward hamstring stretch. Start from a seated position reaching forward towards your feet in a traditional two leg hamstring stretch. Although in this picture the athletes back is slightly rounded you should attempt to keep your back flat with your shoulder blades pulled back and together while reaching forward. Next roll back extending your straight legs over your head until you reach a moderate stretched position. Progressively increase the distance of flexion with each repetition. As you roll back forward reach forward for your toes,





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Walking Knee to Chest

As you walking forward, periodically stop and lift your knee to your chest to stretch out your hamstring, glutei and lower back muscles. As you pull your knee towards your chest, extend up on the opposite toe and hold this position for a long one count. Together this drill puts you in one of the most important sprint positions- the knee drive extension. Posture and form are critical; eyes should be forward, back should be straight with shoulder blades pulled together, and your front toe should be pulled towards the shin creating the hard Z position.



Walking Knee to Shoulder

This exercise is much like the walking knee to chest exercise but the leg is rotated out 90 degrees into the lateral plane. As before, the leg should be pulled upwards as the athlete extends up onto the opposite toe. Hold the position for a long one count before coming back down and switching legs. Maintain posture, core control and balance while alternating between right and left sides.



Foot to Hip (Hip Cradle)

While walking forward, periodically stop and lift your foot to your opposite hip. This will actively stretch the outside portion of your hip and glutei muscles. During this action, your opposite leg should be extended while you rise up on your toe. Hold the position for a long one count before coming down and alternating legs. Once again, posture, balance and core strength are of high importance.

