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It is not the purpose of this report to reprint all the information that is otherwise available to athletes, coaches, instructors, trainers, and martial artists, but to complement, amplify, and supplement other information sources. For additional sources see the references.

Every effort has been made to make this report as complete and accurate as possible. However, there may be mistakes both typographical and in content. Therefore, this report should be used only as a general guide and not as the ultimate source of flexibility training information. Furthermore, this report contains only the latest information available at time of printing.

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Tom Kurz, age 40, kicks cold and does a split with no warm-up

How You Can Have Your Full Flexibility with No Warm-Up

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To have your full flexibility—meaning ability to kick high and do splits—without having to warm up, you need to do these three things:

1) Every morning before breakfast do dynamic (not ballistic!) stretches, for example, leg raises to the front, side, and back. Do as many sets of twelve raises per leg as you need to feel you have reached your current limit of flexibility. If you are a beginner, you may need to do four sets, but after a few months one set of raises in each direction will be enough.

In dynamic stretching (as opposed to ballistic stretching) there are no bouncing or jerky movements and the movements are controlled thorough even though they are quite fast. In dynamic stretching the stretch is not sudden, unlike in ballistic stretching.

To stretch dynamically start your movements slowly, gradually increasing the range and the speed of movements. Do not “throw” your limbs, rather, “lead” or “lift” them,

controlling the movement along the entire range. Then, after you have reached your nearly full range of motion you can increase the velocity of the limb so the last few inches of its trajectory will be less controlled but still the stretch will not be sudden.

According to Wallis and Logan (1964) the principle of specific adaptation to imposed demands in the case of flexibility means that eventually, either at the end of the first set of dynamic stretches or in other sets, you should stretch at a velocity not less than 75% of the maximal velocity used in your actual skill, a kick, for example.

The dynamic stretches for the legs or leg raises are described (with photos) in [Special Report on Stretching #3](#) and in the book *Stretching Scientifically*, and shown in motion on videos [Secrets of Stretching](#) and [Power High Kicks with No Warm-Up!](#)

2) Do the same dynamic stretches again later in a day, in the afternoon or in the evening. On days you have your workout just do these stretches in your warm-up.

The dynamic stretches such as leg raises done twice per day reset the nervous regulation of your muscles' tension and length for dynamic movements (kicks, for example), so your legs will be loose and ready at any time with no warm-up.

3) Do isometric stretches from two to four times a week, depending on how fast you recover after doing them.

The isometric stretches, by means of tension of stretched muscles, strengthen your muscles in extended (stretched out) positions, possibly even causing the muscles to grow longer (Fridén, J. 1984 "Changes in human skeletal muscle induced by long-term eccentric exercise." *Cell and Tissue Research* 236(2):365-372.) Stronger muscles tense less to support any given load. In case of side splits, it means that your inner thigh muscles that support you in a straddle stance, if strengthened with isometric stretches, can be relaxed enough to allow you to slide into a wider stance, eventually so wide it becomes a full side split (see photos below).



Wide straddle stance



Side split

The best time to do isometric stretches is in a cool-down at the end of your kicking, jumping, sprinting, or weightlifting workout. Do isometric stretches after most of the dynamic resistance exercises, for example, after lifting weights. The exceptions to this rule are sit-ups and abdomen crunches which usually should be the last strength exercises in your workout. If you lift additional weights while attempting splits (either on the floor or hanging above it), better do your lower back exercises after these splits

too. Then, after the lower back exercises, such as deadlifts or back extensions, you would do abdomen crunches.

If the muscles that stabilize your knees are weak—so your knees bend inward or down when you do isometric stretches leading to the side split—then do not do heavy squats or heavy leg curls before these stretches. Do them after because these lifts fatigue the muscles that stabilize your knees. (Before the stretches you can do light weights for fast power if your knees feel strong afterwards.)

For more information on isometric stretches see [Report on Stretching #4](#) or book [Stretching Scientifically](#). To see these stretches in motion view video [Secrets of Stretching](#).

Questions and Answers on Flexibility without Any Warm-Up

These are typical questions from readers of [Stretching Scientifically](#). Among them may be just the type that you want to ask. Study the answers, and perhaps you will be able to apply them to your situation.

Question: Is it truly possible to produce a permanent, instantly accessible flexibility that requires no warm-up or any other preparation?

Answer: Yes. Otherwise what is the point of practicing combat techniques such as high kicks if they require a warm-up? I personally know many athletes, some of them active soldiers, who can display much greater flexibility without a warm-up than what I show in the book [Stretching Scientifically](#). Of course, I can do everything that you see in this book also without a warm-up. If your coach or instructor cannot teach you how to have such flexibility then it tells you something about his or her knowledge of human physiology and the methodology of sports training. The key to high kicks with no warm-up is doing dynamic stretches twice a day, being strong, and seldom sore even after the hardest workout. Soreness means that you are not strong enough for what you have done or you did too much of it.

According to Wallis and Logan (*Figure improvement and body conditioning through exercise*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. 1964) the principle of specific adaptation to imposed demands in case of flexibility means that dynamic stretches should be done at a velocity not less than 75% of the maximum velocity used in a given skill (a kick, for example).

Question: The mornings are the best time of the day for my karate workouts. My question is: Can I do isometric stretches at the end of those morning karate workouts or do I have to do isometric stretches in the evening?

Answer: It depends on your objective. If having great flexibility during the day without a warm-up is not your objective, then you can do isometrics in the morning. If you want to be flexible during the day after your morning karate workout, you can postpone isometrics as well as other strenuous strength exercises until late afternoon

or evening. Just make sure that you warm up well. You have to monitor your progress and if your strength and flexibility keep improving while you do isometrics in the morning workouts, then it is fine to do them then.

Question: I have been using your method for over two months and been able to do the full side split for a month. I always have to do warm up and after your stretches I can do it [the side split]. Even after a warm up I am about 30 cm [approximately one foot] off the ground, then after [isometric] stretching I can do it. I want to know how to practice the full split so I can do it without a warm up or not needing to do [any] stretches. I am 15 years old.

Answer: The reason for you having to warm up before you can do a full side split may be that our exercises, although effective enough to let you do the side split, did not have enough time do strengthen your legs as much as it takes to do splits without any warm up. It seems that you are on the right track though. You follow our method for just two months and it took you only one month to reach the full split, so keep following our method and you will reach splits without warming up. Achieving your objective (of displaying your flexibility without a warm-up) depends on “religiously” following the advice given in our book and on the video.

Question: Why does the body have a natural tendency to prevent one from doing a split? I know that I have the ability to do a split because when I do side lunges (one leg extended and one leg pulled in, supporting my body) I can do a “half-split.” That is, I can fully extend one leg till my pelvis hits the floor—but with my other leg pulled in underneath me. I can do this with both legs but not at the same time. Why does the nervous system have to be trained to allow for fully extending both legs at the same time?

Answer: When you spread both legs at the same time, the reflexive contraction of the muscles, on both sides of the body, gets in your way. Reflexes serve useful purposes in normal circumstances and, when your legs slide sideways, the tension of the adductors and their synergists on both sides of the body is needed to maintain an upright posture. To find out more about the nervous system read about the reflexes in neurology textbooks or see page 22 in *Stretching Scientifically*.

The amount of tension during the reflexive contraction is greater if you do not have enough strength in adductors to support your weight in a wide stance. Weak adductors tense harder and stop your sidewise movement earlier, when both legs spread out, and thus are more likely to get strained. The wider the angle between your legs, the less efficient is your adductors’ leverage, and the harder they tense to keep the legs from sliding apart.

Question: I have been practicing TaeKwonDo for 10 years. Due to the time involved in my long hour job and lack of training I feel very stiff in both my legs and find it very difficult to kick as good as before.

Answer: Your problem with stiffness of the legs can probably be solved by simple exercises you can do during short breaks in your work. These exercises are leg raises to the front, side, and back. Do these leg raises starting with low and slow leg swings.

Gradually increase the height you raise your leg at, so after a few leg raises or leg swings your leg reaches its near maximum range of motion. The most important are the front raises, then the side raises.

Question: I am a 16 year old taekwondo student who purchased your book *Stretching Scientifically* about a year ago. The methods discussed in your book have allowed me to achieve both the front and side splits in suspension with relative ease. Thanks to your book, my flexibility and kicking ability have dramatically increased. However, I still cannot go into the side split without warming up first. This is not due to the lack of flexibility in the groin area but to a tightening of the upper sartorius muscle. If you know of a way to overcome this problem, I would greatly appreciate a reply. I also have another problem which I would like to inquire about. Approximately a year ago, I was prematurely attempting the side split in suspension. In doing so, while in the split, I had a loss of balance and fell backward pulling or possibly tearing either the adductor magnus or the upper semimembranosus. This injury still, after a year, causes me discomfort in stretching my right leg and the day after stretching it is very sore. If you know of a way of rehabilitating my leg or another suggested course of action it would be also appreciated. Despite these problems, my flexibility is fantastic thanks to your book.

Answer: Thank you for inquiring about our stretching method. Your objective of displaying your flexibility without a warm-up depends first on treating *properly* your injuries. Before your hamstring and adductors are back in excellent working order no other work should be done. You need to see a doctor who knows Applied Kinesiology. Such doctor will find out the exact cause of the sartorius tightness—which can be stress, high carbohydrate diet, or infection. Sartorius is connected by autonomous nervous system with adrenal glands so when adrenal glands are overworked or exhausted by stress or bad diet (high carbohydrate diet), the sartorius loses strength which may lead to a chronic spasm. Another possible cause of the excessive tension of sartorius can be a too low tonus of the muscles antagonistic to it, for example, biceps femoris or adductor magnus.

The doctor who practices Applied Kinesiology finds a muscle that is not functioning properly and then determines why that muscle is not well. The doctor will then apply the most suitable therapy that will restore proper function of the muscle and get you back to your normal strength and health. Practitioners of Applied Kinesiology can do joint manipulation and mobilization, myofascial therapies, and clinical nutrition. You can obtain addresses of Applied Kinesiologists nearest you by calling (802) 723-6175, sending e-mail to stadion@together.net, or writing to Stadion Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 447, Island Pond, VT 05846-0447, U.S.A.

After successful treatment, you may start seeing improvement in your ability to do splits and kicks without warming up first.

And please do not attempt any suspended splits if you are not strong enough and if your balance is not perfect.

Question: I have recently bought your book *Stretching Scientifically*, and for the last six weeks have been using your program to stretch. My problem is that when beginning the side split stretch, I always have to start from the same position, although the final stretch is increasing dramatically. To achieve this extended position I may have to go through ten or twelve [attempts or sets of tensions and relaxations] of the stretch with of course one or two minutes rest in between.

I use the box splits [side split] as an example because this is where my problem is most prominent and the place where I need my flexibility the most as I am a karate instructor.

Prior to buying your book I had spent long periods using traditional type stretching, i.e., sitting on the floor in a 'box split position' stretching from side to side (none bounce). Before kicking I had to spend 20 to 30 minutes stretching. This I had to do 2 or 3 times a day.

Using your method this situation has improved. Now after warming up and leg lifts I can kick reasonably well. However I would like to do a lot better. Can you help?

Answer: I think strengthening your legs will solve the problem of not being able to slide down into a side split right away. Most people do not systematically strengthen their inner thighs. You practice only six weeks and you made good progress but six weeks is not enough to strengthen inner thighs as much as it takes to support your whole body comfortably, without warming-up, while standing in a split. Also, the stronger your inner thigh muscles the stronger you can contract them, and stronger contractions cause greater relaxations (postcontractive stretch reflex depression) and thus greater stretch.

The length of rest periods that you say you need between attempts also suggests that your legs (or just your inner thighs) are not very strong. As you get stronger the number of sets or attempts it takes you to slide into a side split will gradually get smaller and then eventually you will need only to tense your legs once or twice as you slide into the split.

Bonus Report: How Fast Can You Improve Your Flexibility? (Questions and Answers on How Long Does It Take to Be Able to Do These Splits?)

Question: How long does it take to do full front and side splits using your book *Stretching Scientifically*?

Answer: It depends on your strength and initial flexibility. Some people reach splits within a month while others need several months.

Question: What determines the speed of progress in stretching?

Answer: The speed of progress in stretching depends on your initial strength level and initial flexibility level, and on how rational your total training program is. Normally it takes well under a year (from a couple of months to a few months) to develop the ability to perform splits. I would like to take this opportunity to give you one essential training tip: Consider isometric stretches to be *strength* exercises and apply them as such. Use sufficient rest between workouts. Do not do more exercises than you need, i.e., do not do more than two isometric stretches per workout (you may do a few repetitions of a stretch but do not do many various stretches). Do not overwork any group of muscles.

Question: Why don't you make a video for athletes who have a particular level of flexibility, for example, those who cannot reach their toes?

Answer: This method works regardless of anybody's level of flexibility. Exercises are demonstrated at a fairly high range of motion, but one can do them at any range, no matter how low, and increase it gradually.

Bonus Report: Questions and Answers on Stretching Machines

Question: Can a stretching machine be used to aid stretching?

Answer: There is no need for using stretching machines. In relaxed stretches, you can as easily relax into a stretch on your own on a smooth floor. In isometric stretches, a machine will make it more difficult for you to tense your muscles because it prevents the weight of your body from pressing on your legs and thus forcing them to tense more. The harder you tense in isometric stretches, the greater is the following relaxation and the resulting stretch.

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Resources for Further Study

You can order the following titles by sending your check or money order (payable to Stadion) to Stadion Publishing Company, Inc., P.O. Box 447-R, Island Pond, VT 05846 or by calling toll free 1-800-873-7117 to charge your purchase to a Visa or MasterCard.

Power High Kicks with No Warm-Up!

VHS videotape, 80 min., featuring Mac Mierzejewski (Island Pond, VT: Stadion Publishing Company), 1996. PAL (European system) available.

\$49.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling

The best video on power in high kicks. Teaches the most effective and scientific method of training to add height and devastating power to one's "cold" kicks!

This video teaches how to throw high and powerful **real** Black Belt kicks with no warm-up; how to put more power and snap in high kicks; and how to kick "cold" without injuring oneself, pulling muscles, or even getting sore. Viewers will learn everything there is to know about kicks: fundamentals, footwork, drills, developing power, and technical tips for power and great height with no warm-up. It contains proven sequences of exercises that develop every kick.

Mac won full-contact European Championships Kyokushin Karate, Mas Oyama's Asia-Pacific International Open Karate Tournament, Canadian Kyokushinkai Tournament, and many other full-contact contests. He won most of his fights with kick knockouts (see them on the video).

Science of Sports Training: How to Plan and Control Training for Peak Performance

by Thomas Kurz (Island Pond, VT: Stadion Publishing Company), 1991.

\$26.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling

This comprehensive text delves deeply into topics such as speeding up recovery, using time- and energy-efficient training methods, avoiding overtraining and injuries, applying proven methods of training to specific sports, and maintaining a high level of condition and skills for years. The reader will learn ways to plan and control training for each workout, over a span of years.

Secrets of Stretching: Exercises for the Lower Body

VHS videotape, 98 min., featuring Tom Kurz (Island Pond, VT: Stadion Publishing Company), 1990. PAL (European system) available

\$49.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling

This video features an introduction to general conditioning and follows that with four exercise routines—one for beginners, one for intermediate, and two for advanced athletes. Viewers will learn plenty of how-to's. The focus is on flexibility of legs and strength training for the lower body (abdomen, lower back, legs).

Stretching Scientifically: A Guide to Flexibility Training

by Thomas Kurz (Island Pond, VT: Stadion Publishing Company), 1994.

\$18.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling

This book teaches the safest and the fastest stretching methods. Readers will learn neurological techniques that make it possible to stretch more in a shorter time while preventing injuries. Every stretching exercise is shown and clearly described. The exercises are grouped by body part (neck, arms, legs, trunk) and accompanied by listings of sports in which they can be applied and listings of stretched muscles.

Question: What is the difference between your book and your video on stretching?
Do I need the video?

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Answer: The book shows stretches for the whole body. It only mentions but does not show exercises (other than stretches) that develop strength and endurance while promoting flexibility. The book tells you all that you must know about flexibility but you have to devise your own exercise program on the basis of the provided (and abundant) information.

The video shows stretches as well as recommended endurance and strength exercises for your legs and trunk. The video is of the “do-along” type, so you can do the exercises as you watch the tape. If you do not know much about strength training, if your flexibility suffers because of lack of strength, if doing stretches makes your back tired, if you are often sore after a workout—then the video may help you.

Broke? Or just very thrifty? Well, you can still benefit from Tom Kurz’s books and videos. Just check your local public library! If they do not have what you want, ask the local acquisitions librarian to get it. Or, you can just drop a note in the suggestion box at your public library.

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New! The Latest Special Reports on Stretching!

Now you can get more specific coaching on stretching with **Special Reports** from Thomas Kurz. The special reports are an economical way to consult with Mr. Kurz. Each report consists of an in-depth article plus Thomas Kurz's answers to actual questions on stretching from people like you. Get solid, up-to-date and state-of-the-art information that you can use right away to solve your flexibility problems. Each report is packed with use-it-now details so you can become a true expert on stretching.

These reports include extensive real-life examples, explanations, and resources. They answer the questions most often asked by athletes and martial artists. Each report is the latest word on its subject. In the reports Mr. Kurz combines extensive research with personal experience and condenses it all into a few highly concentrated pages.

#1 How You Can Use Anatomical Tricks to Increase Your Stretches (15 pages, drawings, photos)

#2 How Your Age Affects Your Stretching or How Old You Can Be and Still Achieve Splits (8 pages, photos)

#3 How You Can Stretch Fast for High Kicks with No Warm-Up (13 pages, drawings, photos)

#4 How You Can Stretch Fast for Splits with No Warm-Up (11 pages, drawings, photos)

#5 How and When You Can Do Stretches for Best Results (15 pages, photos)

#6 How You Can Do Splits on Chairs (5 pages, photo)

#7 How You Can Solve Typical Martial Arts Flexibility Problems (14 pages, drawings)

#8 How You Can Combine Stretching with Sports, Martial Arts, or Other Activities for Best Results (12 pages)

#9 How to Improve Your Flexibility and Prevent Injuries with Strength Training (22 pages, drawings, photo)

#10 How You Can Speedup Recovery After You Are Injured or Injuries and What to Do about Them (14 pages, drawings, photo)

#12 How You Can Have Your Full Flexibility with No Warm-Up (6 pages, photos)

Each report includes **Bonus Report #11: How Fast Can You Improve Your Flexibility? with Questions and Answers on How Long Does It Take to Be Able to Do These Splits?**

These reports cover the basics as well as advanced material. In the main articles and in the following questions and answers, you will find vital stretching information which goes beyond the book *Stretching Scientifically* and video *Secrets of Stretching*.

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If you want Thomas Kurz to specially design your own personal weekly flexibility program, please send your check or money order in the amount of \$200.00. Call (802) 723-6175 for details.

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