High Kick Flexibility

Excerpts from...

Ultimate Flexibility
A Complete Guide to Stretching for Martial Arts
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**MEASURED KICKS**

*Primary Benefit:* Improves dynamic flexibility in the legs.
*Martial Arts Application:* Increases kicking height, range and accuracy.

*How to Perform:*
1. On a heavy bag, mark 3 to 4 zones, about three inches in height, with the lowest zone at a very comfortable height for your kick.
2. Throw two full power kicks to the lowest zone, two 80% power kicks to the next highest zone and two 50% power kicks to the remaining zones.
3. Finish up by throwing one kick to each of the zones, from lowest to highest.
4. Rest briefly between each kick and focus on accuracy of height.

**1. Abductor Stretch**

*Primary Benefit:* Stretches the muscles of the outer legs and hip.
*Martial Arts Application:* Increases kicking height and range, particularly for side kick and spinning kicks (hip turning agility).

*How to Perform:*
1. Stand sideways next to a wall.
2. Place your left arm on the wall, with your palm flat on the wall and fingers pointing toward the ceiling.
3. Leaning your left hip into the wall, cross your left leg behind your right leg.

**2. Side Bends**

*Primary Benefit:* Stretches the oblique muscles.
*Martial Arts Application:* Improves flexibility for throwing and striking.

*How to Perform:*
1. Standing, raise your left arm and stretch it over your head.
2. Bend to the right, reaching over your head to toward the floor. Align your arm with your ear as you reach.

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*Repeat all exercises 3-5 times on both sides for optimal effects.*
3. **Lunging Side Stretch**  
**Primary Benefit:** Stretches the large muscles of the torso and legs.  
**Martial Arts Application:** Improves strength and flexibility for throwing and falling.  

**How to Perform:**  
1. Stand with your feet about four feet apart, your left foot slightly turned in and your right foot at a 90 degree angle.  
2. Extend your arms to the sides at shoulder height and bend to the right, flexing your right knee to a 90 angle and keeping your right thigh parallel to the floor.  
3. Place your right hand on the floor beside your right foot. Focus on keeping your head, hip and feet aligned as you stretch.

4. **Y Stretch**  
**Primary Benefit:** Stretches the muscles in the torso, hip and thighs.  
**Martial Arts Application:** Improves flexibility for spinning, twisting and turning movements as well as ground work.  

**How to Perform:**  
1. Begin on your stomach with your chest raised and arms extended.  
2. Swing your right leg over your left, stretching as far to the right as possible, while looking to the front.

5. **Torso Twist**  
**Primary Benefit:** Stretches the large muscles groups of the torso, abdominal oblique, and quadriceps muscles.  
**Martial Arts Application:** Improves flexibility for grappling and spinning kicking skills.  

**How to Perform:**  
1. Lie on your stomach.  
2. Raise your right leg and touch your right foot to your left hand behind you.

6. **V Stretch**  
**Primary Benefit:** Stretches the groin and leg muscles.  
**Martial Arts Application:** Good preparation for kicking practice and working up to doing the more advanced splits.  

**How to Perform:**  
1. Lie on your back with your lower back flat to the floor and your legs raised up toward the ceiling, feet together.  
2. Lower your legs to the sides. You may use your hands to gently support your legs or place your palms on the floor for balance.
7. Advanced Butterfly Stretch
*Primary Benefit:* Stretches the lower back, hip, groin and thigh muscles.
*Martial Arts Application:* Improves kicking range.

*How to Perform:*
1. Sit with your knees bent and the soles of your feet touching.
2. Lean forward from the waist, setting your elbows on the floor in front of you or applying pressure to your knees with your arms.

8. Straddle Stretch
*Primary Benefit:* Stretches the legs and hip.
*Martial Arts Application:* Improves kicking height and range.

*How to Perform:*
1. Seated, spread your legs to the sides.
2. Bend at the waist and stretch forward. Try to keep your toes pointed to the ceiling and your thighs flat on the floor.

9. Standing Split
*Primary Benefit:* Stretches the groove, hamstrings and quads.
*Martial Arts Application:* Improves linear kicking height.

*How to Perform:*
1. Stand a few feet from a wall.
2. Bend forward and place your palms on the floor.
3. Raise one leg behind you with your toes pointed toward the ceiling and slide your foot as far as possible up the wall.

10. Forward Leg Swings
*Primary Benefit:* Improves dynamic flexibility in the legs.
*Martial Arts Application:* Increases kicking height and range, especially for axe kick and front kick.

*How to Perform:*
1. Stand in fighting stance at the bar and place your right hand on the bar for light support.
2. Swing your right leg up, loosely and without power, focusing on a dynamic initiation of the swing.
3. Let it fall and swing past your left foot.

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