

Warming up safely at home

Ready to dance? Don't forget to warm up first! Warming up is really important, as it prepares your body for movement and reduces the risk of injury. But it doesn't just mean sitting on the floor and stretching your legs. Follow our 6-step guide to warming up safely so you're ready to dance, dance, dance round the living room!

Important Information

An adult should make sure that the space is safe for these exercises and also assist their child to achieve the correct execution of these moves. Any child participating must have a suitable parent/guardian present, or have their consent to participate in this activity. Given the nature of these activities, you participate at your own risk and should only do those activities that you consider safe for your own body and the space that you are working in. Before participating, please consider if you have enough clear space, that is free of obstacles and suitable to work in safely; that the floor surface is suitable to work on; and that you have footwear appropriate for that surface. As we are working remotely, we are unable to give you personal feedback. Please warm-up and cool-down appropriately (before and after the session) and do feel free to stop and/or modify activities as necessary.

Step 1: Pump It Up

Raising your heart rate will warm up your body and make your muscles and joints more elastic.

Jogging on the spot

Put on your favourite music and gently jog on the spot for 2 to 3 minutes.

Star jumps

Jump 8 times to the front, 8 to the side, 8 to the back, then 8 to the other side. Repeat with 4 on each side, then 2, then 1. Don't forget to breathe!

Step 2: Move Your Joints

Mobilise your joints with circular actions to get them ready for a wide range of movements.

Neck roll

Standing upright, gently roll your neck from side to side. Repeat 10 times.

Arm circles

Stretch your arms up to the ceiling, then circle them out to the side and down. Repeat 10 times in both directions.

Ankle circles

Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out and your back straight. Circle your ankles 10 times, then repeat in the other direction.

Hip circles

Stand with your feet a little wider than your hips. Circle your hips 10 times in one direction, then repeat in the other direction.

Step 3: Stretch It Out

Now you're warm, it's time to stretch your muscles. Dynamic stretches let your body go through the ranges of motion they'll need for dancing. Hold each stretch for no longer than 15 seconds.

Lunge stretch

Stand with your right leg back in a lunge position, hips facing forward and front knee above your ankle. Drop your right knee to the ground, hold for 15 seconds, then straighten your right leg. Repeat 5 to 10 times on both sides.

High kicks

Stretch your left arm to the front. Kick your right leg up towards your toes, keeping your leg and back straight. Repeat 10 times, then repeat on the other side. Try to get higher each time, without bending your legs.

Step 4: Get Balancing

Practise balancing to improve your focus before you start dancing.

One leg balance

Stand with your feet in parallel and bring your leg to retiré. Try to balance for at least 15 seconds. Repeat with the other leg. For an extra challenge, stretch out your raised leg!

Step 5: Jump Around

If you're feeling a little warm and sweaty by now, do a few more jumps to get even warmer!

Twisting jumps

Jump in the air while twisting your upper body to one side, and your lower body to the other side. Repeat 16 to 32 times, alternating sides.

Criss-cross jumps

Start with your feet hip-width apart. Jump and cross your right foot over your left. Jump back to starting position, then cross your left foot over your right. For an extra challenge, cross your arms too! Repeat 16 to 32 times.

Step 6: Cool Down

Finished your dance session? Give your body time to slow down and avoid muscle soreness by doing some cool-down stretches. Then take a few deep breaths and a big gulp of water!

Roll downs

Stand with your feet hip distance apart, toes forward. Tuck in your chin, round your back and slowly roll down. Straighten your legs if you can and hold for 10 seconds. Bend your knees and slowly roll back up.

Calf stretch

Put your hands up against a wall. Bend your right knee and straighten your left foot out behind you. Feel the stretch in your calf (the back of your lower leg). Hold for 20–30 seconds then repeat on the other side.

Quad stretch

Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Using a chair for balance, bend your right knee and hold your foot behind you for 20-30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

Side stretch

Stand straight with your arms by your side. Slowly move your right hand down towards your right knee, bending sideways at the waist. Hold for 10 seconds, then repeat on the other side.

Stretching Tips

- Always get stretching advice from your dance teacher first.
- Remember that all bodies are different – some people may be more naturally flexible than others.
- Try not to bounce: stretch slowly and gently.
- Don't push too far. Listen to your body – if it hurts too much, stop
- Remember to breathe!

Photo credit: Mark Lees