



National Player & Coach Development Pathway

DEVELOPING SOX

Under 15, 6 x Week Pitching Programme

Emphasis for all young pitchers should focus on balance, rhythm and good mechanics.



Week #1

Pitching instructor will need: home plate, quality ball, measuring tape, pitching plate or line marked on ground, catcher, softball, 2 x written mechanics & velocity test.

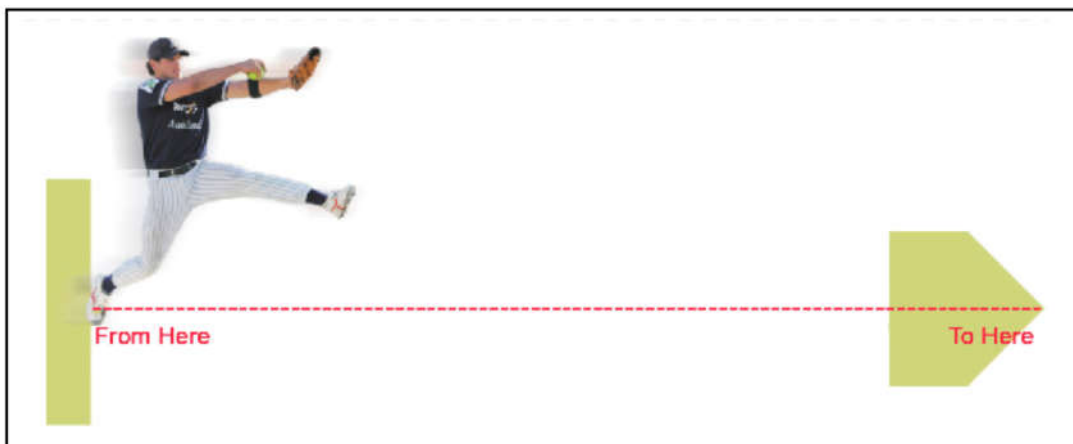
Start with:

1. Introduce players to 5 minute jog and choose 6 dynamic stretches for the players to do. Dynamic stretches require movement, such as running, jumping or kicking.
2. Start with overhand throwing for 3 minutes and then fielding 10 x ground balls.
3. Have the pitcher warm up pitching nice & easy gradually building up to top speed.
4. Once the pitcher is fully warmed up and pitching at full speed place a home plate down and measure the appropriate distance.

U15 Pitching Distances

U15 Boys	U15 Girls
13.11 metres (same as senior women)	11.50 metres

Make sure the pitcher is aware that the distance is measured from the back point of the home plate to the front of the pitching plate.



U15 representative pitchers should have their own home plate and length of string with the pitching measurement. Players will have to arrange their own competent catcher and provide a ball, glove and suitable footwear for all 6 week sessions.

Critique the pitcher on the following mechanics & velocity test:

1. Tell the pitcher that you want them to pitch x20 pitches and take their time and follow the softball set up rules like in a game.
2. Use the test provided to critique the pitcher by recording yes or no next to the twelve points.
3. If you are unsure about any of these points just tell the pitcher it was too fast to really see. You will look again at that particular point in the next lesson.
4. After the x20 pitches take the written information to the pitcher and tell which of the points they are doing really well.
5. Then talk and demonstrate some of the points they can improve on.

U15 Pitching Mechanics & Velocity Critiquing Sheet

<p>Set up</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Takes signal with hands apart & both feet on pitchers' plate - Hands then together with ball hidden in glove - Feet comfortable shoulder width apart - Arms relaxed resting on body waiting 2 seconds & no longer than 5 seconds - Consciously breathes in and blow out longer 	<p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Drive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Body on lean driving off mound (shoulder over knee, knee over foot) 	<p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Use both arms & hide ball</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both glove & pitching arm go out in a reverse C. - Ball is hidden in glove until eye level 	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Use legs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Powers off mound with legs 	<p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Strides up & out</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stride knee is up & high - Glove arm is over stride leg 	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p>

<p>Up & close</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pitching arm close to ear 	<p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Letter K</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Body is upright - Body has rotated toward foul line - Pivot foot laces are facing foul line 	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Stay tall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Torso is upright when stride foot contacts ground 	<p>Yes /No</p>
<p>Power-line</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stride foot contact on power line - Step foot landing to catcher at 1-2 o'clock (RHP), 10-11 o'clock (LHP) - Body is upright, stride leg is flexed – not bent) 	<p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p>
<p>Arm speed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A fast arm should be consistent, in coordination with the body. The downswing should be quicker at the bottom of the motion. 	<p>Yes /No</p>

		
<p>Spin Development</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses fingers & wrist - Upper body Resists against the stride leg - Pitching arm is bent on downswing 	<p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p>
<p>Stride & follow through</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Back leg slides in behind stride leg - Pitching arm elbow bends and follows up to chest - Fingers curl in toward palm 	<p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p> <p>Yes /No</p>

Grip & Spin development

1. Chat to the pitcher and ask them which pitches they throw. Do they have different grips or just one grip? At the U15 age group we are looking for the pitcher to ideally have some form of two pitches. A drop & a rise pitch. They may have a changeup, but this is not the priority.
2. Demonstrate the drop grip and the rise grip and the desired spin and the reason for the two types of pitches. Tell them that the grip will be modified by each individual as the grip is a personal thing dependent on hand size but the key is to have a different grip for the down pitch and a different grip for the up pitch and to work on the two different spins.



U15 Pitch Week #1 Homework:

1. Give the pitcher a copy of the critiquing form so they can see which of the points they are successful at and which needs work.
2. Make sure the pitcher is aware which points they need to prioritise for this week.
3. Pitch 30-40 minutes 4 x during the week. Count pitching in a game as one of these four times.
4. Put black tape around the ball so you can see more easily which way the ball is spinning.

Week #2

Pitching instructor will need: home plate, quality ball, measuring tape, pitching plate or line marked on ground, catcher, softball, 2 x written mechanics & velocity test.

Start with:

1. Introduce players to 5 minute jog and choose 8 dynamic stretches for the players to do.
2. Start with overhand throwing for 3 minutes then fielding 10 x ground balls.
3. Have the pitcher warm up pitching nice & easy gradually building up to top speed
4. Once the pitcher is pitching at full speed put down a home plate and measure the distance.

Critiquing form mechanics & velocity:

1. Ask the pitcher which of the points they have particularly been working on during the x4 practices that week. Tell them to pitch x20 pitches and take their time and you will critique them on those particular points.
2. Discuss with the pitcher after the x20 pitches on the points they were working on.

Spin Recognition:

Chat with the pitcher and ask them to show you the drop grip and the spin and their rise grip and the desired spin. They should have two grips and know the purpose of these two pitches. Just because they have the grip doesn't mean to say they have the pitch.

They have to earn the skill of the correct spin and this takes time to develop.

1. Have they put black tape around the ball?
2. Ask the pitcher to pitch 6x drops and then 6x rises.
3. Discuss with the pitcher which pitch they are more capable of pitching and establish if they are likely to become a dominant drop ball pitcher or a dominant rise ball pitcher. If you are not sure, then tell the pitcher that this is something you will both work on deciding over the next few weeks.

Pitching called strikes:

1. Ask the pitcher to pitch x8 called strikes directly over the plate to the catcher.
2. How many out of 8 do they get in the zone?

U15 Elastic Drill #1 (Week2)

Hold a piece of elastic across in front of the home plate at belly button height with someone holding either end of the elastic.

This test is checking the spin on the pitch as well as the pitchers body awareness of vertical strikes (plate width + ball width either side) from the ground surface to above the head height of the, "given" hitter.

Pitch x6 pitches with pace below the elastic with the drop grip and spin:	How many from six went below? It doesn't have to be a strike it just has to be below the elastic.	What was the spin like? Was it similar to a drop? Was it a spiral?	Did the pitcher pitch with pace?
Pitch x6 pitches with pace above the elastic with the rise grip and spin:	How many from six went above the elastic? It doesn't have to be a strike it just has to be above the elastic	What was the spin like? Was it something like a rise spin? Was it more like a spiral? Was it more like a curve?	Did the pitcher pitch with pace?



U15 Pitch Week #2 Homework:

1. Pitch for 30-40 minutes 4x during the week (one of these might be in a game).
2. Mechanics & Velocity critiquing points: make sure the pitcher is aware of which of these points they need to try to improve on.
3. Do the Elastic drill with imaginary elastic and with the tape on the ball x 6 pitches?

Week #3

Pitching instructor will need: home plate, quality ball, measuring tape, pitching plate or line marked on ground, catcher, softball, 2 x written mechanics & velocity test and a length of elastic.

Start with:

1. Do the warmup jog & dynamic stretching as in the previous weeks and the throwing and 10x ground balls.
2. Start the pitching warm up building up to top speed. Then have the pitcher put down the home plate and measure the correct distance. It is important that then pitcher takes responsibility for this so do not let the catcher or coach or parent take charge of this.

Critiquing Mechanics & Velocity:

1. Discuss with the pitcher the points they worked on developing from this list over the last week.
2. Pitcher pitches x20 pitches and you critique them on these points.
3. Discuss with the pitcher the critiquing points and demonstrate and chat about the key points they could improve on.
4. Praise the player for their effort.

Grip & Spin development:

Chat with the pitcher and ask them to show you their drop and rise grips and indicate each of the spins they are trying to achieve. Make sure they have a good understanding of these two different spins.

Discuss the best location for these two different pitches and advise them that to illustrate the next drill is a more advanced elastic drill which works on the spin as well as the location of the pitch.

Body Awareness & Spin:

U15 Elastic Drill #2 (Week3)

Hold a piece of elastic across in front of the home plate at the batter's knee height. This is the bottom of the strike zone. Have someone hold either end of the elastic. This test is checking the spin on the pitch as well as the pitchers body awareness to throw below the elastic.

Pitch x6 pitches with pace below the elastic with the drop grip and spin:	How many from six went below? It doesn't have to be a	What was the spin like? Was it similar to a	Did the pitcher pitch with pace?
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	strike it just has to be below the elastic.	drop? Was it a spiral?	
Now move the elastic to the batter's armpit height for the top of the strike zone. This test is checking the spin on the pitch as well as the pitchers body awareness to throw above the elastic.			
Pitch x6 pitches with pace above the elastic with the rise grip and spin:	How many from six went above the elastic? Any pitch above the elastic counts as good.	What was the spin like? Was it something like a rise spin? Was it more like a spiral? Was it more like a curve?	Did the pitcher pitch with pace?

Discuss the results with the pitcher. Most pitchers will have one spin more accomplished than the other. Discuss which was their best either the drop or the rise and discuss whether they are likely to become a dominant drop ball pitcher or a dominant rise ball pitcher. Either way we still expect them to have the two grips and some form of these two pitches.

Pitching Called strikes:

1. Have the pitcher pitch x8 called strikes with which ever pitch is their dominant pitch. You should have by now established which their dominant pitch is. It is either a drop or a rise. This pitch has the best spin and they need to be able to throw it for a called strike when needed.



U15 Pitch Week #3 Homework:

1. Pitch for 30-40 minutes 4x during the week (One of these 4x could be in a game)
2. Establish which of the twelve critiquing points need attention this week
3. Practice the ElasticDrill#2 with imaginary elastic at the bottom of the strike zone & at the top of the zone.

Week #4

Pitching instructor will need: home plate, quality ball, measuring tape, pitching plate or line marked on ground, catcher, softball, 2 x written mechanics & velocity test, elastic and sticky tape.

Start with:

Do the warmup jog & dynamic stretching as in the previous weeks and the throwing and 10x ground balls.

Start the pitching warm up building up to top speed. Then have the pitcher put down the home plate and measure the correct distance. It is important that then pitcher takes responsibility for this so do not let the catcher or coach or parent take charge of this.

Critiquing Mechanics & Velocity:

1. Discuss with the pitcher the points they worked on developing from this list over the last week.
2. Pitcher pitches x20 pitches and you critique them on these points.
3. Discuss with the pitcher the critiquing points and demonstrate and chat about the key points they could improve on.
4. Praise the player for their effort.

Called strikes:

Ask the pitcher to pitch x8 called strikes with their dominant pitch. Make sure they are clear about which is their dominant pitch.

Body awareness & control drill:

Tell the pitcher that you are now going to check on their ability to pitch under and over the elastic but this drill is now more advanced with the home plate now being halved.

U15 Pitchers Elastic/Tape Drill#1

Speed: Pitch hard for all of the below tests
Spin: 2 x spins = Down spin and up spin

Pitch HEIGHT and Pitch Width Test with Elastic & Tape:

Stick a piece of tape down the middle of the home plate so the pitcher can clearly see that the plate is in 2 halves.

Low Elastic & Tape Test:

Hold the elastic across the front of the plate at the batter's knee level. The pitcher takes their drop grip pitches to the right half of the tape below the low elastic. How many out of 6 can they get to the right side? Do the same to the left side of the tap. How many out of 6 pitches? Count as correct any pitch which is under the low elastic and on the correct half of the plate. It doesn't have to be a strike, it just has to meet this criterion. Pitch it hard. 4/6 is good.

High Elastic & Tape Test:

Hold the elastic at the top of the strike zone in front of the home plate and again make sure the pitcher can clearly see the piece of tape halving the plate. With the rise ball grip the pitcher pitches above the high elastic to the right of the tape. How many out of 6 pitches can they get correct? Then do the same exercise to the left of the tape. How many out of 6 are correct? How many pitches can the pitcher pitch below the elastic? 4/6 is good.

Test	1	2	3	4	5	6	Score
Low/Tape/Right							
Low/Tape/Left							
High/Tape/Right							
High/Tape/Left							



U15 Pitch Week #4 Homework:

1. Pitch for 30 minutes 4x during the week.
2. Establish which of the twelve critiquing points need attention this week.
3. Practice the Elastic Tape Drill#1 with an imaginary elastic at the bottom of the strike zone & at the top of the zone and a piece of tape down the middle of the home plate.

Week #5

See pitcher in a game or otherwise have them pitch with a batter from their own age group. It is however more preferable to see them in a game situation.

Check that their set up is in accordance with the rules:

- Do they appear relaxed when taking the signal from the catcher?
- Check their presence on the mound
- Loose & relaxed - Conscious breathing
- Body language – posture
- Demeanour – confident, moody, angry?
- Ability to stay ahead of the count

Hopefully you will be able to discuss with the pitcher after this game otherwise do it the following week, week 6.

Week #5

Summarise & discuss change up:

- Discuss pitchers game approach if not done so after last week's game
- Warm up as other weeks with jog, dynamic stretching and pitching warm up building up to top speed, then home plate and measure the pitching distance
- Pitch 10x drops and 10x rises.

Called strikes:

- Pitch 8x called strikes with dominant pitch.

Control Drill:

- Do Elastic / Tape/drill#1 and score this drill on the back of the V& M critiquing sheet.

Test	1	2	3	4	5	6	Score
Low/Tape/Right							
Low/Tape/Left							
High/Tape/Right							
High/Tape/Left							

Next step in elastic/tape drill is to mix the pitches so pitching to all 4 corners.
Go thru this drill three times and score results on the back of the critiquing V & M sheet.

Elastic/Tape Drill#2 = MIX pitches to all four corners Go through 3x with Total of 12 pitches				
Low/Tape/Right	Low/Tape/Left	High/Tape/Right	High/Tape/Left	
				<u>12</u>

Pitching instructor check the spin on all locations and make sure pitcher is taking on a different grip for low & high pitches.

Indicate with an illustration of what the spin looks like for the two different pitches on the back of the M&V sheet.

Critiquing Mechanics & Velocity:

- Discuss with the pitcher any points to still work on from the V& M testing sheet.

Change up:

- This is the 3rd pitch which a pitcher can play around with
- Ask the pitcher if they throw a change up and if so, have a look at it
- Make suggestions or introduce a different change up. The real key is deception. The pitching arm must be quick to “sell” the pitch, so the grip & release are the things that slow the pitch down
- Alternate dominant pitch with changeup x 12 pitches in total.

To Finish:

1. Pitch 6x called strikes with dominant pitch
2. Praise the pitcher for their effort throughout the 6 week course.

Dynamic Stretches

Dynamic stretching is good for waking up muscles, to get them ready to work hard. This involves moving your limbs through the full range of motion that they will be used in during activity.

Effective Dynamic Stretching

- Always do 5-10 minutes of aerobic exercise before starting dynamic stretching
- Maintain tension in the lower abdominals to protect your lower back and to control movement of your trunk
- Keep your knees in line with your toes to protect your knees
- Do not force the movement or lose control of the movement

Gradually increase the range of the movement over a series of repetitions as you loosen up.

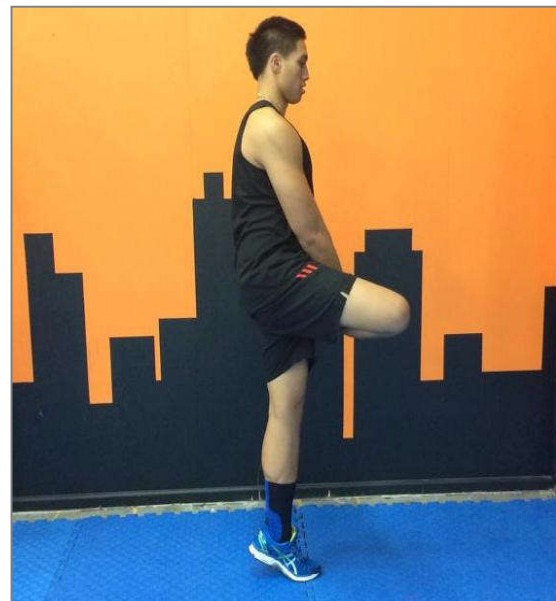
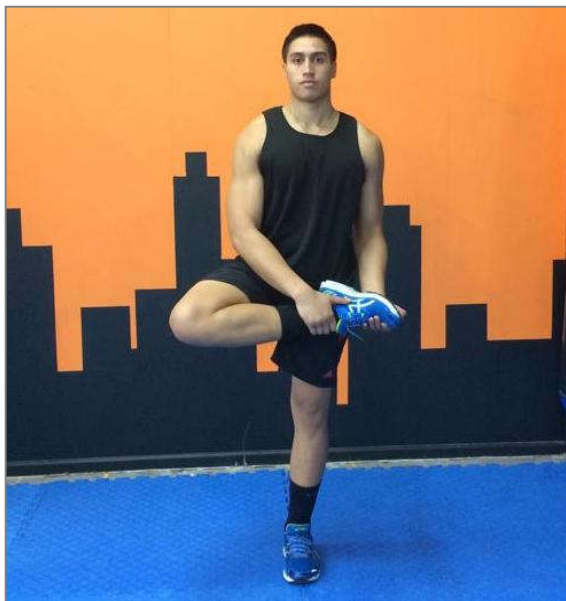
You can add these exercises in your warmup too if you choose – Jog, high knees, butt kicks, side steps stretching arms out, backward jog, straight leg kick, high skips, etc

Make sure you don't over stretch, listen to your body and know your limits.

1. Figure four

Lift one foot towards the other thigh. Grasp ankle and heel and pull up at the same time as tippee toe. A few steps in between. Back straight, head and chest up.

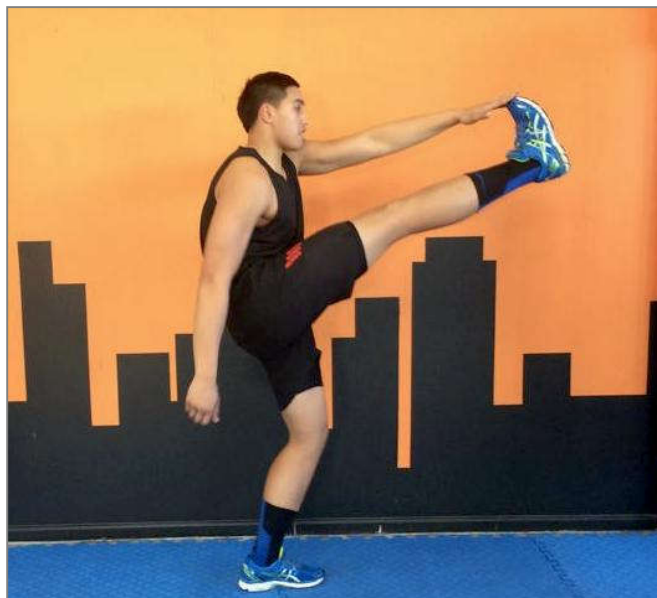
Target: Glutes and legs.



2. Tin soldiers

Stand on the balls of feet, kick one foot forward and touch toes with opposite hand. Alternate as you move forward.

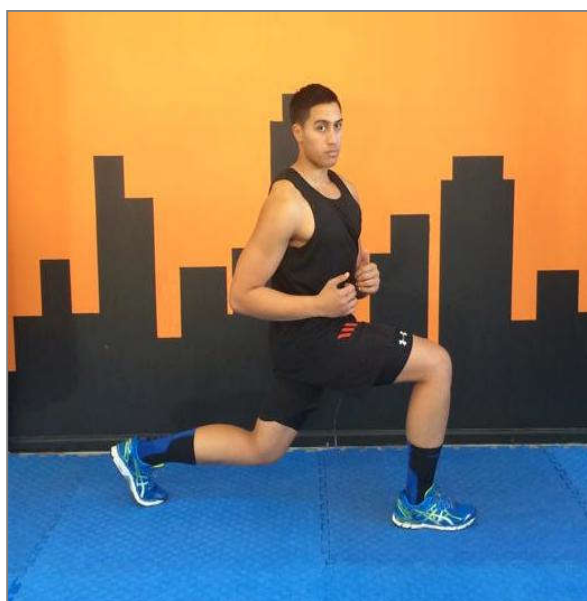
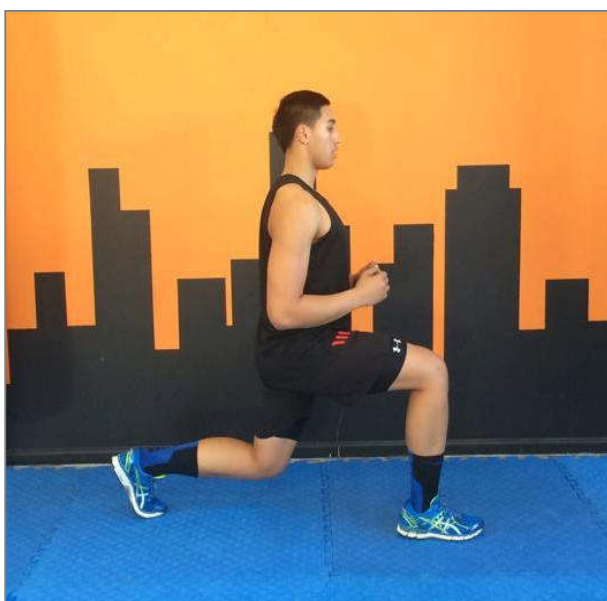
Target – Glutes and hamstrings.



3. Lunge twist

Walking forward lunge, knee behind toes, then twist torso away from extended leg then the other way. Make sure we have control of balance and core.

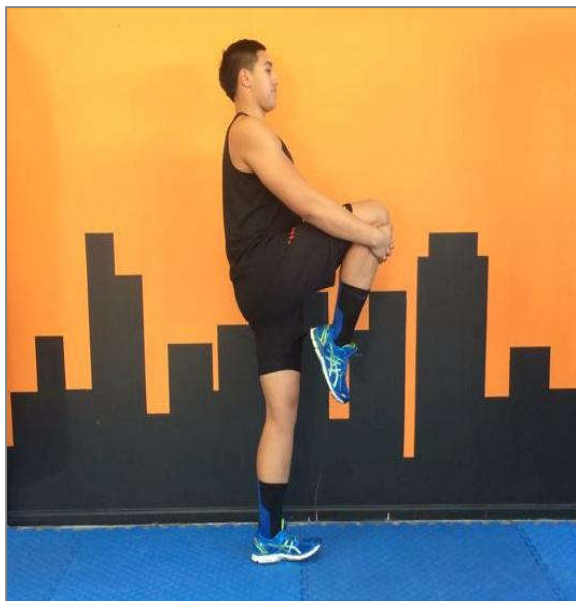
Target – hip flexors, core and back.



4. Knee hug

Pulling your knee into your chest at the same time as tippee toe. A few steps in between.

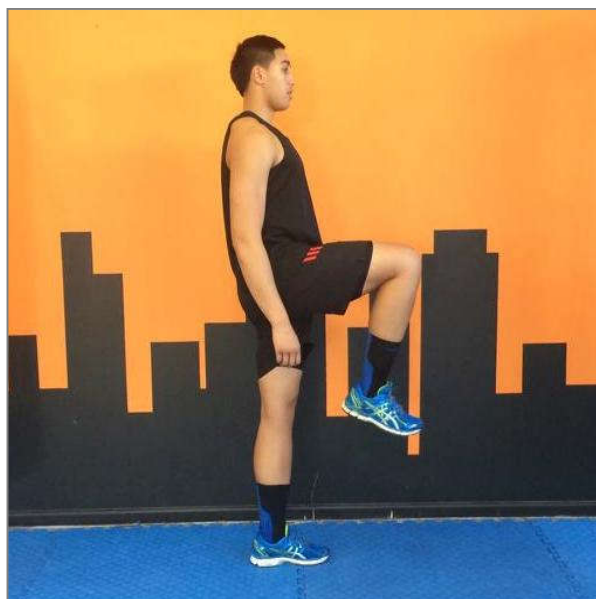
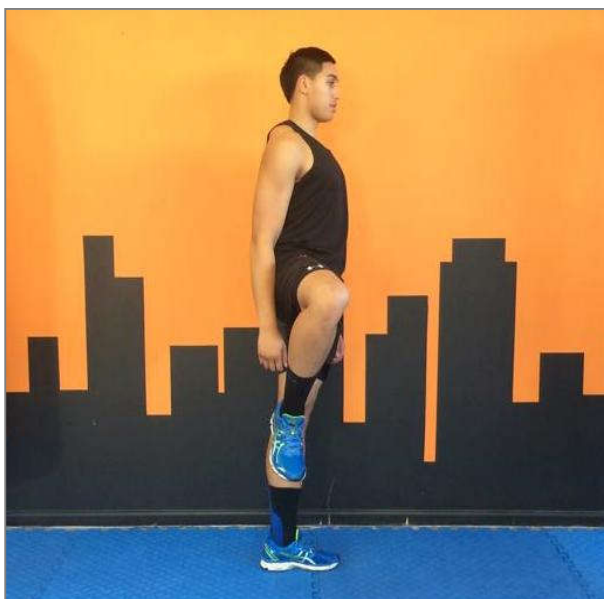
Target - Glutes.



5. Hip flexor

Walking forwards rotate you hips from outer to in, with a few steps in between. Also do it backwards, in to out.

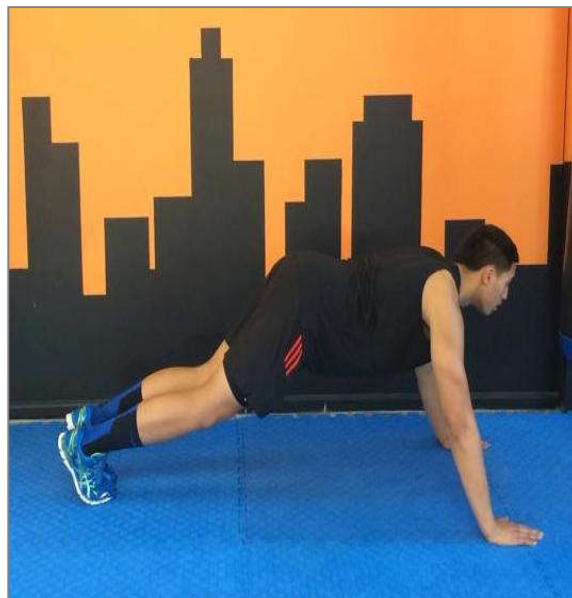
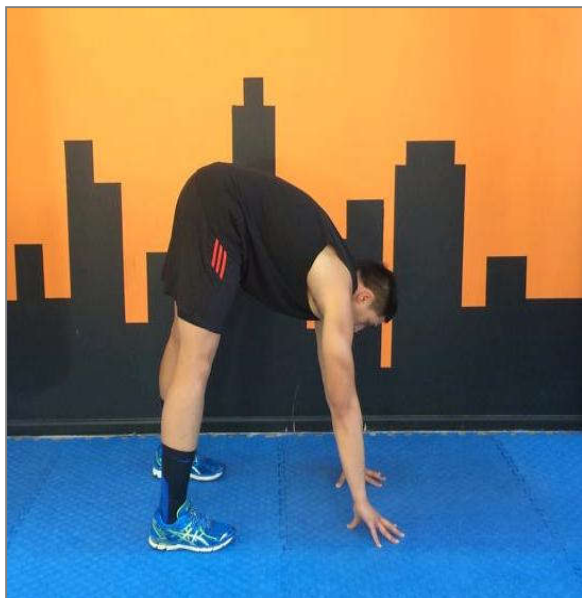
Target – Hip flexors.



6. Hand walk

Fold forwards and walk your hands out. Then bring your feet up to follow.

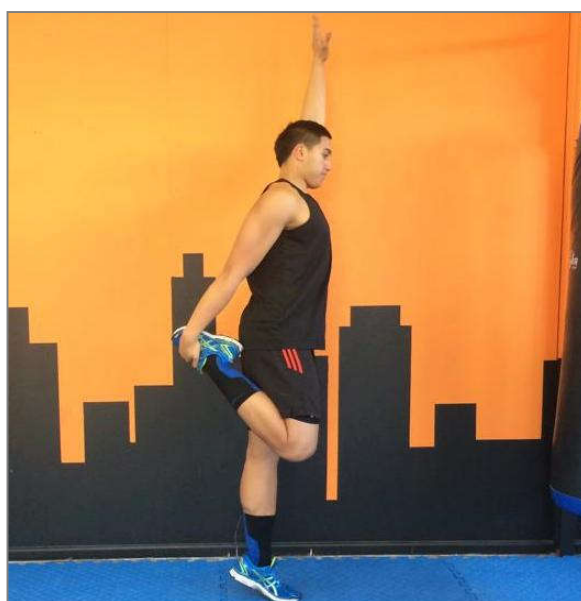
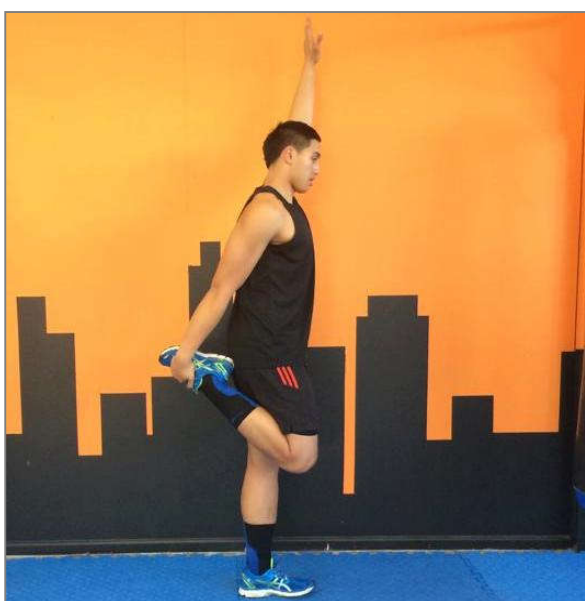
Target - Hamstrings and back.



7. Quad Stretch

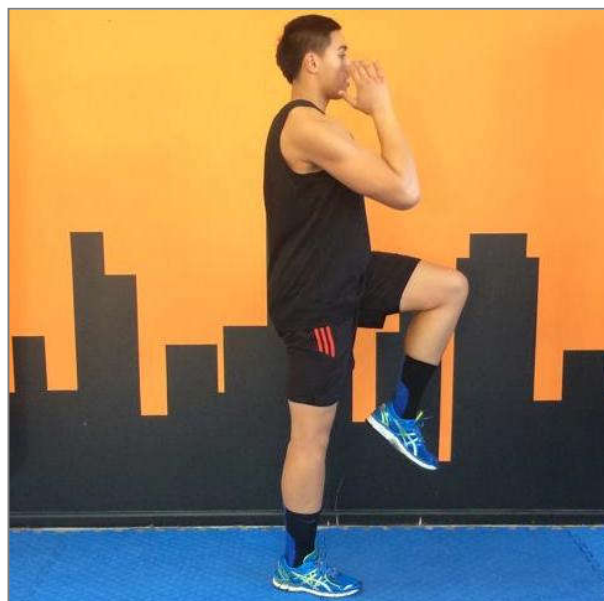
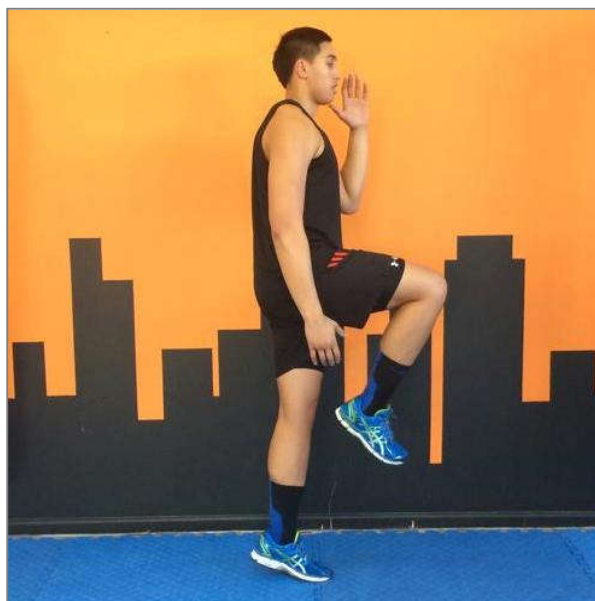
Hold foot up behind butt and reach to the sky with the other hand and tippee toe. Few steps between.

Target – Quads and calves.



8. Hip Skips

Drive arms with high knees with skip.



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