

MUVMETHOD
**SYSTEMIZE
YOUR STRETCH
EFFORTS**
guide

BY
CHRISTINE JONES

If you're a dancer, dance instructor or studio owner looking to:

- › Save Time
- › Maximize Your Stretch Efforts
- › Stretch All Muscle Groups
(not just your hamstrings and inner hips)
- › Avoid Overstretching
- › Avoid Under Stretching
- › Create Consistency
- › Safely Improve Overall Flexibility and Mobility
- › Decrease Pain and Risk of Injury

Then download our
**Systemize Your Stretch
Efforts Guide NOW!**



FOLLOW US ON:



MORE INFO: WWW.MUVMETHOD.COM

Systemize Your Stretch Efforts Guide

Looking for a systemized approach to stretching? One that saves you time and actually works? One that is balanced and effective? One that safely improves flexibility, mobility, range of motion and muscle recruitment, while decreasing pain and risk of overuse injuries? Than look no further; this guide is for you!

Our Systemize Your Stretch Efforts Guide will introduce you to some key concepts that, if properly implemented, can be used to alleviate some of your biggest stretching challenges.

If you are a dancer, dance instructor or dance studio owner looking to:

- Save Time
- Maximize Your Stretch Efforts
- Stretch All Muscle Groups (not just your hamstrings and inner hips)
- Avoid Overstretching
- Avoid Under Stretching
- Create Consistency
- Safely Improve Overall Flexibility and Mobility
- Decrease Pain and Risk of Injury

Then our Systemize Your Stretch Efforts Guide is for YOU!

This guide will introduce the following concepts:

- What Regulates Flexibility
- How To Approach Stretching
- How To Avoid Stretch Pitfalls
- How To Avoid Overstretching
- How To Create A Balanced Stretch Sequence

....and provide you with step-by-step instructions to one of our signature (and VERY effective) mUvStretch sequences.

What Regulates Flexibility

It is often thought that “stretching” your muscles will increase your flexibility, so many have looked to the muscular system to improve range of motion. But we now know that your flexibility has less to do with your muscular system and more to do with your nervous system. You see, muscles don’t actually “stretch.” Rather, your nervous system allows the muscle to lengthen (or it doesn’t) dependent upon the input signals it receives.

The nervous system has an incredible amount of control over the muscles of the human body. It activates muscles for contraction, coordinates the timing of those contractions, regulates muscular reflexes, and can even inhibit the amount that a muscle can be stretched. Since mobility is vital in dance, it can be very helpful to understand the role that the nervous system plays in inhibiting flexibility through a process called neuromuscular inhibition.

Think of bending over and touching your toes. At the beginning of this movement, you feel very little (if any) resistance. But as you get closer to the limit of your flexibility, you start to feel tension in the back of your thighs where your hamstrings are. The tension that you are feeling is in part due (and maybe mostly due) to the slight activation of these muscles. It’s almost as if the brain says, “that’s far enough,” and engages your hamstrings just enough to initially slow and eventually stop any further increases in hamstring length. It’s interesting to think that you are consciously trying to stretch and lengthen your muscle, but your brain takes over subconsciously and automatically inhibits any further length changes.

Therefore, in order to increase flexibility, you need to decrease neuromuscular inhibition. When you are stretching, you want your muscles to release rather than contract. In order for this to happen, you need to be in a more relaxed state. When you are more relaxed, you are much more likely to send the right input signals to allow for a greater length change in the muscle(s) being stretched. Keep on reading to find out more about sending the right signals when stretching!

How To Approach Stretching

As previously mentioned, your nervous system regulates flexibility through a process called neuromuscular inhibition, where your brain activates, or engages your muscles just enough to initially slow, and eventually stop any further increases in length. The nervous system does this dependent of its perception of what is happening (meaning whether it perceives your attempt at stretching as safe or unsafe).

If your nervous system perceives your stretch efforts as safe, it will allow for a greater length change, or deeper stretch. If it perceives your stretch efforts as unsafe, neuromuscular inhibition will take over and slow or stop any further length change, or a deeper stretch. Of course, you can push through this and essentially override the nervous system and its attempts to keep you safe, but we HIGHLY recommend you don’t. This is where injury happens. Rather, implement a safe and



effective approach to stretching and the outcome will be increased flexibility and mobility and decreased pain and chance of injury. It's a win-win!

Make sure to follow our [3 stretch principles](#) below to experience your greatest gains in flexibility and mobility.

- **Breathe Deep** - This works to focus the mind and increase parasympathetic nervous system activity. This will create a more relaxed physical and mental state that is optimal for stretching.
- **Stay Focused** - When we are focused, we are in tune with what is really going on. We will notice if we are holding our breath and can then deepen it. We will notice if we are forcing a stretch and causing pain and then back off. We will notice if we are not doing the stretch to our fullest capacity to avoid any discomfort and can then deepen it. We need to learn our optimal place for stretching from day to day. When we stay focused and present, we get better at this.
- **Avoid Force** - This means avoid stretching too fast and too far. Forcing stretches creates pain and will often lead to injury. The injury may not happen right then but over time it can do damage to your body. Be gentle and kind to yourself when you stretch!

How To Avoid Stretch Pitfalls

A pitfall is a hidden or unexpected difficulty or challenge. After working with dancers, dance instructors and studio owners for over 20 years, we have a pretty good understanding of the pitfalls, or challenges, faced when attempting to create effective stretch programs.

Our mUvstretch system was designed with the following pitfalls in mind. We provide tools, techniques and programming to help you avoid them.

Pitfall #1 - Lack of Time

Yes we get it! You have a LOT to fit into your weekly schedule....jazz, ballet, pointe, contemporary, hip hop, tap, choreography, ballroom, acro, tumbling, turns and leaps and let's not forget, cleaning and rehearsing your competition dances.

With so much to do, it can be easy to push your stretches to the side. But don't! With all that dancers are being asked to do now, it is critical that they sufficiently stretch. They need balanced stretch sequences that provide variety and are dance specific- meaning they address the muscles and muscle groups commonly tight in dancers.

This is where we come in, mUvStretch provides a system you can follow to ensure that you don't fall into pitfall #1, lack of time. Implementing our systemized approach to stretching will allow

you and your dancers to sufficiently stretch throughout the entire dance season. And once the system is put in place, it will actually save you time!

Pitfall #2 - Lack of Variety

It is so important to stretch all muscles and muscle groups in your body. Or in other words, it is important to vary your stretches and stretch sequences. However, in the dance world, most stretches and stretch sequences tend to lack variety, in that they are very hamstrings and inner hip and thigh dominant. This leads to under stretching certain parts of the body while overstretching others.

Adding variety into your daily and weekly stretch sequences ensures that you avoid under stretching and overstretching. It works to safely improve flexibility and mobility, while decreasing your chance of pain and injury.

Our mUvStretch System offers a lot of variety! In fact, our program includes over 65 yoga inspired stretches, all of which fall under a particular category to ensure that all muscles and muscle groups are sufficiently stretched.

Our categories and stretches include:

- 11 Hip Flexor and Quad Stretches ■
- 13 Outer Hip, Lateral Thigh, Deep 6 Hip Rotator and Side Body Stretches ■
- 20 Hamstring Stretches ■
- 10 Inner Hip and Thigh Stretches ■
- 14 Shoulder, Mid Back and Spine stretches ■

Pitfall #3 - Lack of Consistency

With consistency in your stretch efforts, you are able to streamline your stretch system. As a result, your stretch efforts become efficient and effective. Who doesn't want that? But in order to create consistency, you need a system. A system that covers:

- What to stretch (exact muscles and muscle groups)
- Why to stretch them (what will stretching them improve)
- How to stretch them (65 different dance specific stretches)

Once you understand the what, why and how's of stretching, you are then able to implement our systemized approach to stretching. Whether you are using our system for at home or in studio use, you now have a safe, consistent and efficient stretch program!

And one more thing on consistency....we also name all of the stretches in our program. We then provide the name of the stretch to our dancers everytime they do the stretch. This creates recognition; once you name something, it changes from strange to familiar. And your dancers should be very familiar with the stretches they are doing on a weekly basis.



Imagine trying to teach a ballet class without using ballet terminology! Without a name, it would take a lot of extra time to teach a plie. Using proper dance terminology cements the meaning of the word with the action. This allows for greater retention and progress. Your stretches should not be any different. They need a name so that your students become familiar with what you are asking of them. This also allows you to simply cue your stretch sequences so that you can walk around the room and provide feedback. Taking the time upfront to name the stretches your dancers are doing saves you time in the long run and creates consistency.

Pitfall #4 - Lack of Anatomical Application

Placement and alignment is key to maximizing the benefits of the stretches you are doing. Therefore, understanding muscles, bones, ligaments and joints and the way they interact with one another when stretching, can completely change the outcome of the stretch.

One of the things you will notice with the stretches in our program is that, at times, they may feel and look very different than you are used to. This is because when we teach dancers our stretches, we don't focus on the aesthetics (how it looks); we focus on anatomy and how to deepen stretches based on the origin and insertion (attachment sites) of muscles and muscle groups. Therefore, we place the bones in a very particular way so that we can increase the amount the muscle has to lengthen.

For example, if you were to lie down on your back and draw your right knee in towards the side of your body and then fully extend (straighten) your leg to the side, (we call this Reclined Extended Leg Pose) it is quite common for the right hip to lift. This is very normal in the dance world and is how most approach this stretch.

However, when you lift your hip, the hamstrings don't have to lengthen (stretch) as much due to the origin and insertions of the muscles. Essentially, lifting your hip decreases the amount that your hamstring has to lengthen. When stretching, you want to increase the distance your hamstring has to lengthen. Therefore, we ask our dancers to keep their hips level, flex the ankle (of the leg being stretched) and then perform the stretch.

Initially, this feels very limiting for most dancers, as the leg will feel low and the perception is often that you aren't doing it well, due to the aesthetics factor. But over time, maintaining proper placement and alignment will greatly improve flexibility, due to the position of your joints and the effect this has on your muscular and nervous systems. Then when you are in class, at convention or performing and allow the hip to hike (because now we care about aesthetics) it will go a LOT higher. So when it comes to stretching, focus on anatomy rather than aesthetics!

How To Avoid Overstretching

Overstretching is a thing! And the definitions include:

- To extend or use what is beyond reasonable, usual or proper.

- To subject to undue strain.
- To stretch (one's muscles or another body part) to the point of strain or injury.

Essentially, over stretching refers to taking a joint past its natural physiological range. The key point here is natural. When you move beyond your natural joint range, you often stretch ligaments. Ligaments are designed to stabilize your joints. Therefore, we do not recommend you stretch them.

Once a ligament is stretched or over stretched, it has a hard time coming back and the once natural joint range can be lost. This results in a loss of joint stability and even a risk of damaging the surrounding tissues and bones, especially in young students as their bones are not fully developed. Over stretching can lead to damaging the shape of a socket, such as the hip socket, and even developing spinal stress fractures...so how do you avoid this?

As mentioned above, lack of variety in your stretches and stretch sequences can lead to overstretching. But another factor, lack of listening to your body, can also lead to over stretching. This is where our 3 stretch principles: breathe deep, stay focused and avoid force, found under “How to Approach Stretching” come in.

These principles, when applied, help you tune in to how your body is responding to what you are doing. When you pay attention, you will notice if you stretch too far. Generally, your breath will become shallow and your body will tense. When you are focused, you will notice and can then make a decision to back off. When you aren't focused, you may push right through the shallow breath and tense muscles and force your body into a stretch it isn't ready for (and may NEVER be ready for). This is where overstretching happens. So, when stretching, keep in mind that just because you can doesn't mean you should. Breathe deep, stay focused, avoid force and add variety to keep your body safe!

How To Create A Balanced Stretch Sequence

A balanced stretch sequence is one in which all the surrounding musculature of a joint is sufficiently stretched. This works to improve overall mobility in that area and restore balanced joint positions. It is particularly impactful regarding the pelvis and spine, as these are areas where much movement in dance is initiated from.

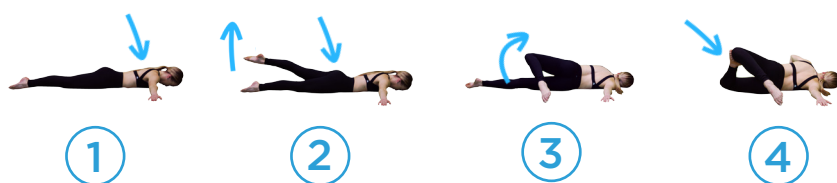
When we restore balance, we bring a joint to a neutral resting position, or the position it was designed to spend the most time in. This is most effective for proper muscle recruitment, and allows a muscle to do less work for the same effect! This creates efficiency and ease of movement. It can even decrease “wear and tear,” pain and the chance of an overuse injury. Therefore, not only do we create stretch sequences to improve flexibility, mobility and overall ROM, but we also use them to restore neutral joint positions and improve posture, alignment and muscle recruitment.

20 Minute Stretch Sequence

Enjoy the following balanced stretch sequence. It includes a variety of stretches designed to improve overall hip, spinal and shoulder flexibility and mobility.

****Ensure you properly warm-up prior to doing the following stretch sequence.**

Crocodile



1 Begin on your belly with your forehead to the mat. Bring your arms to a T.

2 Lift your left leg. Avoid flexing your hips.

3 Bend your left knee and reach your left toes over to the right.

4 Option to bend your right knee and place the sole of your right foot on your left knee to increase the chest and shoulder stretch.

Repeat on your left side.

Do:

☐ Hold Crocodile ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

☐ Engage Mula Bandha

☐ Breathe Deep

Ditch:

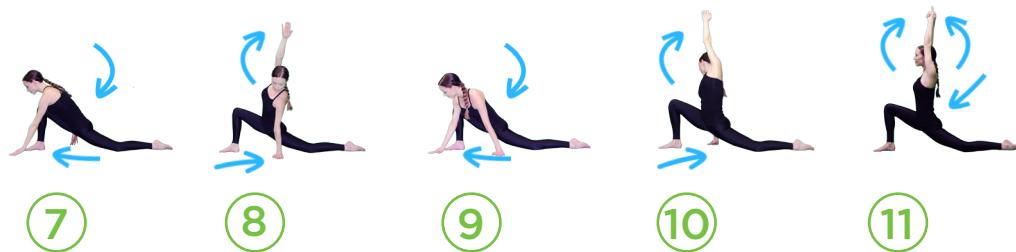
☐ Tension

☐ Force

Crescent Moon Sweeps





- 1 Begin in Table Pose.
- 2 Step your right foot forward and keep your back knee down.
- 3 Lift your chest and come to your fingertips and lengthen your spine.
- 4 Reach your arms out, around and up. Draw your shoulder blades down and back. Lift your hip bones towards your ribs.
- 5 Interlace your fingers and release your pointer fingers. Find depth in your back hip.
- 6 Side Bend to the right. Plant your right palm. Bring your left bicep to your ear. Maintain depth in your back hip.



- 7 Walk your hands forward. Maintain depth in your back hip.
- 8 Walk your hands to the left. Plant your left palm by your left hip. Side bend to the left and bring your right bicep to your ear. Maintain depth in your back hip.
- 9 Walk your hands forward. Maintain depth in your back hip.
- 10 Walk your hands to the right. Plant your right palm by your right hip and side bend to the right. Bring your left bicep to your ear. Maintain depth in your back hip.
- 11 Reach your arms out, around and up. Interlace your fingers and release your pointer fingers. Maintain depth in your back hip.

Do:

- ☐ Repeat steps 6-10 
- ☐ Hold step 11 
- ☐ Engage Mula Bandha
- ☐ Breathe Deep

Ditch:

- ☐ Tension
- ☐ Force
- ☐ Elevated Shoulders
- ☐ Hip Flexion

Psoas Release



- 1 Begin in Crescent Moon. Interlace your fingers and release your pointer fingers. Find depth in your back hip.
- 2 Straighten your right leg and shift your hips back over your left knee.
- 3 Clasp your palms behind your back. Draw your shoulder blades down and back. Draw your ribs together.
- 4 Posteriorly tilt your pelvis. Lift your hip bones towards your ribs.

Do:

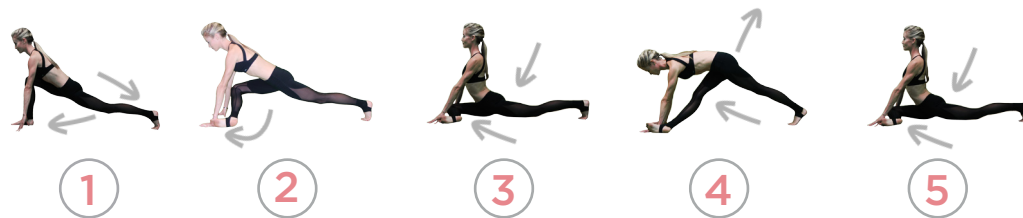
- ☐ Hold Psoas Release ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞
- ☐ Engage Mula Bandha
- ☐ Breathe Deep

Ditch:

- ☒ Tension
- ☒ Force
- ☒ Elevated Shoulders
- ☒ Hip Flexion

Half Pigeon Prep

Flex your front ankle to protect your front knee.



- 1 Begin in Low Lunge.
- 2 Heel toe your right foot over to the left.
- 3 Lower your right shin, thigh and hips to the the mat. Keep your back toes tucked. Draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.
- 4 Straighten your front leg, lift your hips and come to the pinky edge side of your front foot. Draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.
- 5 Bend your front leg and lower your hips, thigh and shin back down to your mat. Keep your back toes tucked. Draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.

Do:

- ☐ Repeat steps 6 and 7 🔁 🔁 🔁 🔁 🔁
- ☐ Breathe Deep
- ☐ Draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.

Ditch:

- ☒ Tension
- ☒ Spinal flexion
- ☒ External rotation and abduction of your back hip

Cow Face Pose Variation - Side Bend



- 1 Begin in Easy Seat.
- 2 Cross your right knee over your left knee.
- 3 Plant your right palm on the mat in line with your right hip. Externally rotate your left shoulder and reach your left arm towards the ceiling.
- 4 Side bend to the right and bring your right forearm to the mat.
- 5 Option to look up.

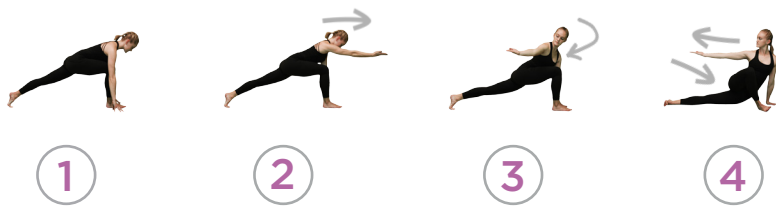
Do:

- ☐ Hold Cow Face Pose Side Bend 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏
- ☐ Engage Mula Bandha
- ☐ Press your right leg against your left to anchor your left hip down
- ☐ Breathe Deep

Ditch:

- ☐ Tension
- ☐ Force
- ☐ Elevated shoulders
- ☐ Spinal flexion

Horizon Lunge to Sunrise



- 1 Begin in Low Lunge with your right foot forward.
- 2 Reach your right arm forward and turn your palm up.
- 3 Twist to your right and begin to reach your right arm out to the side.
- 4 Reach your right arm back behind you. Roll to the pinky toe edge of both feet and lower your left hip to the mat. Maintain length through your right side.



- 5 Reach your right arm up towards the ceiling and begin to straighten your right leg.
- 6 Fully straighten your right leg and stay on the pinky toe edge of both feet. Reach your right arm overhead next to your right ear.
- 7 Option to look up.

Do:

- ☐ Repeat Horizon Lunge to Sunrise
- ☐ Engage Mula Bandha
- ☐ Breathe deep
- ☐ Relax your neck and shoulders

Ditch:

- ☒ Tension
- ☒ Force
- ☒ Elevated shoulders
- ☒ Spinal flexion




1 Begin in Low Lunge.

2 Straighten your right leg, come high onto your fingertips and lengthen your spine from your tailbone to the crown of your head. Draw your shoulder blades towards one another.

3 Roll to the pinky toe edge of your right foot as you draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.

Do:

- ☐ Repeat Pyramid 
- ☐ Engage Mula Bandha
- ☐ Breathe deep
- ☐ Relax your neck and shoulders

Ditch:

- ☒ Tension
- ☒ Force
- ☒ Elevated shoulders
- ☒ Spinal flexion

Revolved Triangle



1 Begin in Pyramid.

2 Lower your left hand to your mat. Come high on your fingertips and lengthen your spine from your tailbone to the crown of your head. Draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.

3 Twist to your right and reach your right arm up to the ceiling. Bring your fingertips directly over your right shoulder. Actively draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.

4 Look up past your right fingertips and continue to actively draw your right hip back and your left hip forward.

Do:

- ☐ Hold Revolved Triangle Pose ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞
- ☐ Engage Mula Bandha and twist from your torso
- ☐ Draw your right hip back and your left hip forward
- ☐ Breathe deep

Ditch:

- ☒ Tension
- ☒ Force
- ☒ Elevated shoulders
- ☒ Spinal flexion

***Repeat stretches 2-8 on your left side

Half Wall Frog

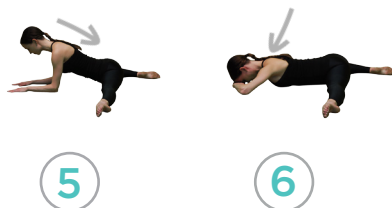


1 Begin in Table Pose.

2 Slide your knees out to the sides directly in line with your hips. Place the soles of your feet against the wall. Come to your forearms.

3 Straighten your left leg out to the side.

4 Shift your weight forward.



5 Shift your weight back.

6 Lower your upper body to the floor and lower your forehead to your mat or the back of your hands.

Repeat Half Wall Frog on your left side

Do:

- ☐ Repeat steps 5 and 6
- ☐ Then hold step 7
- ☐ Engage Mula Bandha
- ☐ Breathe deep

Ditch:

- ☒ Tension
- ☒ Force
- ☒ Elevated shoulders