GoalTodo

How to do the splits: a safe, honest plan for your front splits

Do the splits

40 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Sep 5

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Your starting point

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  4 holds of 20 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check

Done when: You did all 4 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You also wrote down your toe-reach gap

Sticking point: Your numbers may look a long way off. That's why you measure: it is simply where you start, and in a few months you'll be glad you wrote it down.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Learn the five stretches

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  4 holds of 20 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check

Done when: You did all 4 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You can do each of the five stretches the way the guide describes, without looking

Sticking point: In the seated forward fold, bend your knees a little if your back rounds hard. Reaching from the hips matters more than reaching far.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Thirty-second holds

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check

Done when: You did all 4 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Every hold lasted 30 seconds without pain

Sticking point: Thirty seconds feels long at first. Use a timer, breathe out slowly and let the stretch ease off a little as you hold it.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Easy week

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  3 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did 3 lighter sessions, went no lower than last week, and logged your split check

Sticking point: An easy week can feel like slacking. It isn't: it gives your body a chance to settle at the range you have, and it keeps the plan going in a busy week.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Five days a week

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides

Sticking point: Five short sessions do more than two long ones. If a day goes wrong, do the warm-up and two stretches rather than nothing.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Breathe into the stretch

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date — ☐
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check — ☐

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You held every stretch breathing slowly, without holding your breath

Sticking point: If you catch yourself holding your breath or clenching your jaw, you've gone too far. Ease back until you can breathe easily.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Hips back, back long

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. In the forward fold you lead with your chest, not your head

Sticking point: Tight hamstrings make you round your back to reach. Sit on the edge of a folded towel or cushion: it tilts your hips forward and makes the fold easier.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Toe-touch check

Foundations

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: lying hamstring stretch, seated forward fold, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch and buttock stretch (each one is described in the guide)
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Sitting with straight legs, your fingertips touch your toes for 30 seconds at mild tension. If not yet, repeat this week

Sticking point: If you're still short of your toes, that's common: repeat this week, then move on. Nothing in the next phase needs you to touch your toes on a cold day.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

Add the half split

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date
- [ ] Toe-reach check: sit with your legs straight out in front, reach slowly towards your toes to mild tension and measure the gap from your fingertips to your toes
  once a week, written down next to your split check

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You can hold a half split on each side with your hands on books

Sticking point: Keep the front knee soft at first. Straighten it only as far as mild tension allows.

Feb 1–7
Week 10

Square hips in the lunge

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. In your kneeling lunge, both hip bones face forward

Sticking point: If your back hip swings out to the side, the stretch slips away from the front of your hip. Put your hands on your hips to feel them square up.

Feb 8–14
Week 11

Lower hands in the half split

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Your hands rest one book lower in the half split than when you started it, on both sides

Sticking point: One side is often tighter. Give the tighter side the same holds, not extra force.

Feb 15–21
Week 12

Easy week

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, side-lying thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  3 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did 3 lighter sessions, went no lower than last week, and logged your split check

Sticking point: An easy week can feel like slacking. It isn't: it gives your body a chance to settle at the range you have, and it keeps the plan going in a busy week.

Feb 22–28
Week 13

Add the kneeling thigh stretch

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, kneeling thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You can hold the kneeling thigh stretch on each side at mild tension

Sticking point: This one can be strong. Start with the back foot against a wall or sofa only a little way up, or hold the foot with a towel around it.

Mar 1–7
Week 14

Hands towards the floor

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, kneeling thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. In the half split, your fingertips reach the floor or a single book on both sides

Sticking point: If your back is rounding to get your hands down, keep a book under them. A long back with a book beats a rounded one on the floor.

Mar 8–14
Week 15

Hips forward in the lunge

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, kneeling thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. In the kneeling lunge you can tuck your tailbone and move your hips forward to feel the front of the back hip

Sticking point: Arching your lower back fakes the stretch. Tuck your tailbone under first, then move forward a little.

Mar 15–21
Week 16

Half split gate

Lunges and half splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge, kneeling thigh stretch, lying hamstring stretch and buttock stretch
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. In the half split your front leg is straight and your fingertips touch the floor or one book on each side. If not yet, repeat this week

Sticking point: Repeating this week is normal. The supported split asks for this range on both legs at once.

Mar 22–28
Week 17

First supported split

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips resting on a stack of books or blocks under a cushion, as high as you need, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You held your supported split on each side, at a height that let you breathe easily

Sticking point: Go higher than you think you need. The aim is a split you can rest in, not one you fight to hold.

Mar 29–Apr 4
Week 18

Settle at your height

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on the same support as last week, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Every supported split hold felt steady, with no sharp pain on either side

Sticking point: Don't take anything away yet. Holding the same height for another week is how it starts to feel easy.

Apr 5–11
Week 19

One book lower

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on your stack with one book taken away, only if last week felt easy, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You took a book away on at least one side, or kept the height because it did not feel easy yet, and logged your gap

Sticking point: If one book lower brings sharp pain, stop and put the book back. If the pain is still there the next day or comes back each time you stretch, see a doctor or physiotherapist before going lower (see the warning signs in the guide). If it's only a pull you can't breathe through, stay at the higher height until it feels easy.

Apr 12–18
Week 20

Easy week

Supported splits

- [ ] [ ] [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  3 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on last week's support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  3 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did 3 lighter sessions, went no lower than last week, and logged your split check

Sticking point: An easy week can feel like slacking. It isn't: it gives your body a chance to settle at the range you have, and it keeps the plan going in a busy week.

Apr 19–25
Week 21

Square up

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on the same support as last week, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. In your side photo, your hips face forward and your back knee points at the floor

Sticking point: If your back knee turns out to the side, the split looks lower but it's a different stretch. Turn it back down, even if that raises you up.

Apr 26–May 2
Week 22

Front leg straight

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on the same support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date — ☐

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Your front leg is straight, with the kneecap pointing at the ceiling, on both sides

Sticking point: Straightening the front knee adds a lot of stretch. Raise the support if you need to.

May 3–9
Week 23

Another book lower

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on your stack with one more book taken away, only if last week felt easy, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date — ☐

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You lowered your support on at least one side, or kept the height because it did not feel easy yet, and logged your gap

Sticking point: Progress is rarely the same both sides. Keep both sides at their own height.

May 10–16
Week 24

Hold your ground

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on the same support as last week, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Every hold at this height felt calm on both sides

Sticking point: This is a repeat week on purpose. Weeks when nothing changes are part of the months, not a sign it isn't working.

May 17–23
Week 25

Back leg straight

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on the same support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Your back leg is straight behind you, with the top of the foot or the toes on the floor

Sticking point: A bent back knee lets the front of the hip off the hook. Straighten it and let the support take your weight.

May 24–30
Week 26

Lower again

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on your stack with one more book taken away, only if last week felt easy, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You lowered your support on at least one side, or kept the height because it did not feel easy yet, and logged your gap

Sticking point: If a side won't go lower, keep it where it is and keep breathing. Forcing it is how people get hurt.

May 31–Jun 6
Week 27

Compare your photos

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on the same support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You put your week 1 and this week's side photos next to each other and wrote down the change

Sticking point: Weekly changes are tiny. Side-by-side photos months apart show what a tape measure can't.

Jun 7–13
Week 28

Easy week

Supported splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  3 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on last week's support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  3 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did 3 lighter sessions, went no lower than last week, and logged your split check

Sticking point: An easy week can feel like slacking. It isn't: it gives your body a chance to settle at the range you have, and it keeps the plan going in a busy week.

Jun 14–20
Week 29

Cushion height

Low splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on a firm cushion only, if your last support was about that height, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You held your supported split on a cushion on at least one side

Sticking point: If a cushion alone is too low, put a book back under it. Each side can have its own height.

Jun 21–27
Week 30

Front leg fully straight

Low splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on your cushion, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Your front leg stays straight for the whole 30 seconds on both sides

Sticking point: If your front hamstring cramps, bend the knee a little, breathe, and straighten again.

Jun 28–Jul 4
Week 31

Thinner support

Low splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on a folded towel or a thinner cushion, only if last week felt easy, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in — ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date — ☐

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You lowered your support on at least one side, or kept the height because it did not feel easy yet, and logged your gap

Sticking point: Lower supports put more weight through the stretch. Take your time getting down: slide your front heel forward a little at a time.

Jul 5–11
Week 32

Easy week

Low splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  3 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on last week's support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  3 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did 3 lighter sessions, went no lower than last week, and logged your split check

Sticking point: An easy week can feel like slacking. It isn't: it gives your body a chance to settle at the range you have, and it keeps the plan going in a busy week.

Jul 12–18
Week 33

Towel height

Low splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on a folded towel, only on a side where your current support felt easy last week (otherwise stay where you are), hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You held your split with your hips on a folded towel on at least one side

Sticking point: If the towel is a step too far on one side, keep that side on the cushion.

Jul 19–25
Week 34

Hold your ground

Low splits

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on the same support as last week, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Every hold at this height felt calm on both sides

Sticking point: Another repeat week on purpose. Near the floor, small changes take longer.

Jul 26–Aug 1
Week 35

Towel height, both sides

Low splits

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on a folded towel on each side where your current support felt easy last week (otherwise stay where you are), hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. You held your split with your hips on a folded towel on both sides

Sticking point: If your hips twist to get lower, square them and accept a little more height.

Aug 2–8
Week 36

Easy week

Low splits

- [ ] [ ] [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  3 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on last week's support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  3 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did 3 lighter sessions, went no lower than last week, and logged your split check

Sticking point: An easy week can feel like slacking. It isn't: it gives your body a chance to settle at the range you have, and it keeps the plan going in a busy week.

Aug 9–15
Week 37

Floor in sight

The full split

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: hips on a single fold of towel, or just touching the floor with your hands taking some weight, only on a side where a folded towel felt easy last week (otherwise stay at your current height), hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Your split check gap is under 2 centimetres, or the same as last week, on at least one side

Sticking point: If your gap has not changed for four weeks in a row with no pain, keep going at this height and ask a physiotherapist to look at your hips: some hips need a different approach.

Aug 16–22
Week 38

Hips to the floor, one side

The full split

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Supported split on each side: no support on your better side if a single fold of towel felt easy there last week, and your current support on the other, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. On your better side your hips rest on the floor, legs straight, for 30 seconds

Sticking point: Lower yourself with your hands on books, slowly. Don't drop the last centimetre.

Aug 23–29
Week 39

Both sides

The full split

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: no support on either side if you can rest there, otherwise your current support, hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: You did all 5 sessions, warmed up before each one, and logged your split check for both sides. Your hips rest on the floor on both sides, or within a towel's thickness, for 30 seconds each

Sticking point: The second side often lags by a week or two. That's fine: the finish waits for it.

Aug 30–Sep 5
Week 40

Your splits

The full split

- [ ] Warm up first: march on the spot, walk briskly or go up and down the stairs until you feel warm
  5 to 10 minutes, before every session
- [ ] Stretches: half split, kneeling lunge and kneeling thigh stretch, before your supported split
  4 holds of 30 seconds for each stretch on each side, easing in to mild tension and breathing slowly
- [ ] Supported split on each side: no support, hips on the floor, on each side where you can rest there (otherwise your current support), hands on books or blocks beside you, back knee pointing down
  4 holds of 30 seconds on each side, at mild tension, never lower than feels easy to breathe in
- [ ] Split check: after your session, ease into your front split on each side as low as mild tension allows, with hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, write it down, and take a side photo from hip height in the same spot
  once a week, both sides, with the date

Done when: After a warm-up, you sit in a front split on each side with both legs straight, hips square and resting on the floor, and hold it calmly for 30 seconds. You took the side photos

Sticking point: Do it on a warm day, after your warm-up. Put your week 1 photo next to this one. To keep your splits, keep stretching a few times a week.

How to do the splits

A front split is sitting on the floor with one leg straight out in front and the other straight out behind, hips facing forward. Three areas usually stop you getting down: the back of the front thigh (hamstrings), the front of the back hip (hip flexors) and the front of the back thigh (quadriceps). The way there is the same for everyone:

1. Warm up first. Five to 10 minutes of light activity, such as a quick walk, marching on the spot or going up and down the stairs. Harvard Health says stretching muscles before they're warmed up can hurt them.

2. Stretch to mild tension, never to pain. You should feel a stretch, not a sharp or burning pain.

3. Hold, don't bounce. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends holding a static stretch for 10 to 30 seconds and repeating it two to four times, for about 60 seconds of stretching in total. This plan builds up to more than that, 30-second holds four times on each side, because a split needs more range than everyday flexibility. On a day that feels like too much, do two or three. Bouncing can cause injury.

4. Stretch often. ACSM's minimum is two or three days a week, and Harvard Health says you'll make the best gains stretching daily, or on as many days as you can. This plan builds up to five days a week.

5. Lower your support a little at a time. You do the split with your hips resting on books and a cushion, and take a book away only when the height you're at feels easy.

6. Give it months. See the next section.

If you feel sharp pain, numbness or tingling, stop. The warning signs are further down this page.

How long it really takes

Search for the splits and you'll find promises of doing them in a day, a week or 30 days. The sources we trust don't say that. Harvard Health says it takes weeks to months to get flexible, and that you have to keep working at it to keep it. A physical therapist at a sports medicine institute told a reporter who tried the one-week challenge that it takes months for most adults, and that lasting change in flexibility usually shows over six months to a year, depending on how often you stretch and the range you start with.

So this plan takes months: about 9 months if you can't touch your toes, 6 if you can, and 3 if you're already close. These lengths are our own. The two longer ones sit inside that six-months-to-a-year range; the 12-week plan is shorter because you start most of the way there. People differ a lot, and your weekly measurements tell you more about your own pace than any number on a video. If you get there sooner, that's fine. If you take longer, that's normal too: keep going at the height that feels easy.

How the plan works

Four, then five sessions a week, each about 25 to 35 minutes: a warm-up, then your stretches, each held for up to 30 seconds, up to four times on each side. Sessions are on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday once you're at five a week. Move them to suit you, and stretch after a walk or a workout if that's easier: your muscles are already warm.

A split check every Saturday. After your session, ease into your front split on each side, as low as mild tension allows, with your hands on books. Measure from the floor to the crease at the front of your hips with a tape measure or ruler, and write it down with the date. Then take a side photo from hip height, from the same spot each week. The tape measure shows small changes; photos a few months apart show the big ones.

Each week has a "done when". Tick it and move on. If you can't yet, repeat the week: nothing is lost. Most weeks ask you to log your check, and some ask for a particular position, such as touching your toes or squaring your hips.

Easy weeks and repeat weeks are built in. Every few weeks there's a lighter week of three sessions, and later on there are weeks where you stay at the same height on purpose. A shorter plan leaves some of them out, never the last weeks before your finish.

The finish line: after a warm-up, a front split on each side with both legs straight, hips square and resting on the floor, held calmly for 30 seconds.

Which level to pick

Warm up first, then try this:

- I can't touch my toes yet: standing or sitting with your knees straight, your fingertips stop short of your toes. You start with five gentle stretches and work towards touching your toes, then half splits, then supported splits. 40 weeks.
- I can touch my toes: you reach your toes with straight knees, but your front split is a long way off the floor. You start with half splits and move to supported splits after six weeks. 26 weeks.
- I'm a hand's width from the floor: in a front split with your hands on books, the gap between your hips and the floor is about a hand's width or less on both sides. You start on a low support. 12 weeks.

If you're between two levels, pick the earlier one. If one side is much tighter than the other, pick the level for your tighter side.

Before you start

See a doctor or physiotherapist first if you have an injury or pain in your hips, back, knees or legs, a health condition, any symptoms you're unsure about, or you've had a recent operation, or if you're pregnant or have recently given birth. The NHS gives the same advice before any exercise routine. A physiotherapist can also look at how your hips move and adjust the stretches for you.

If you're very flexible already, or you've been told you have hypermobile joints, talk to a GP or physiotherapist before you start. The NHS describes joint hypermobility syndrome as having very flexible joints (you may think of yourself as double-jointed), with pain, stiffness, sprains or joints that "pop out". It advises not to overextend your joints just because you can, and says the main treatment is building muscle strength and fitness so your joints are better protected. Chasing more range isn't the right goal for everyone.

Never stretch cold. Always do the warm-up first, even on your split check day.

Warning signs: when to stop

Stretching should feel like mild tension that eases as you breathe. Stop the stretch straight away if you feel:

- sharp, sudden or stabbing pain, anywhere
- pain that makes you hold your breath or clench your jaw
- numbness, tingling or pins and needles in your leg or foot
- pain in a joint, such as your knee or the front of your hip, rather than a stretch in a muscle

Harvard Health says that if a stretch is painful, there may be an injury: stop stretching that muscle and talk to your doctor. See a doctor or physiotherapist if pain is still there the next day, if it comes back every time you stretch, or if pins and needles keep coming back or last a long time, as the NHS advises. In the UK, NHS 111 can advise if you're worried. Don't stretch through it, and don't restart that stretch until you've had advice.

The stretches, in words

Do each stretch on both sides. Ease in until you feel mild tension, hold for 30 seconds while you breathe slowly, then ease out.

- Lying hamstring stretch. Lie on your back with one knee bent and that foot flat. Raise the other leg and hold it behind the thigh or calf (or loop a towel around the foot). Straighten the raised leg until you feel a stretch behind the thigh.
- Seated forward fold. Sit on the edge of a folded towel or cushion with your legs straight out in front. Lean forward from your hips, keeping your back long, and slide your hands down your shins.
- Kneeling lunge. Kneel on a cushion on one knee, with the other foot flat on the floor in front and that knee over the ankle. Tuck your tailbone under, then move your hips forward until you feel a stretch at the front of the back hip. Hold a chair or your front knee for balance.
- Side-lying thigh stretch. Lie on your side. Hold the top of your upper foot and gently pull the heel towards your bottom, knees together, to stretch the front of the thigh.
- Buttock stretch. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Cross one ankle over the other thigh, hold the back of that thigh and pull it gently towards your chest.
- Half split. From the kneeling lunge, move your hips back over your back knee and straighten your front leg, heel on the floor and toes up. Put your hands on books either side of your front leg and lean forward with a long back.
- Kneeling thigh stretch. In the kneeling lunge, reach back and hold your back foot (or a towel around it), or rest the top of the back foot against a wall or sofa. Keep your tailbone tucked and your hips gently forward.
- Supported split. Put a stack of books under a cushion where your hips will land. From the half split, slide your front heel forward and your back knee back, lowering your hips onto the cushion. Hands on books beside you. Hips face forward, the back knee points down, the front kneecap points to the ceiling. Take a book away only when your current height feels easy.

What you need

Nothing to buy. You need:

- a cushion or two for under your knee and your hips

- a stack of sturdy books, or yoga blocks if you already have them
- a folded towel, for the lowest steps and for looping round a foot
- a tape measure or ruler, and a notebook or your phone's notes for your split checks
- a phone camera propped at hip height for your side photos, with a timer
- a carpet, rug or mat, so your feet don't slip, and clothes you can move in

What about side splits?

Side splits (also called middle or box splits) stretch mostly the inner thighs, while front splits stretch the back of one leg and the front of the other hip. This plan is for front splits, on both sides, because one finish line keeps your sessions short enough to do five days a week. We give side splits a section here rather than a level: levels in this plan are where you start, and side splits are a different finish line.

If you want to work on side splits too, add two short sessions a week once you're in the supported split phase, or after you finish, with the same rules: warm up first, mild tension, 30-second holds, no bouncing.

- Groin stretch: sit with the soles of your feet together, knees out, and lean forward from the hips.
- Wide-leg forward fold: sit with your legs wide and straight, toes up, and lean forward with a long back, hands on books.
- Supported side split: stand with your feet wide and toes forward, hands on a chair seat or a stack of books, and slide your feet a little wider at a time.

We haven't found a source we trust that gives a timeline for side splits, so we don't give one. Measure the gap from your hips to the floor each week, as for front splits, and stop for the same warning signs.

Common mistakes

- Stretching cold. Always warm up first. Muscles stretch more easily when warm.
- Bouncing. Hold still. Bouncing or jerking into a stretch can cause injury.
- Pushing into pain. Mild tension is the right level. If you're gritting your teeth, you've gone too far.
- Holding your breath. Breathe slowly through every hold.
- Twisting your hips open to get lower. It looks lower in a photo, but it's a different stretch. Keep your hips square and accept a little more height.
- Taking a book away too soon. Only lower your support when the current height feels easy, one side at a time.
- Chasing a 30-day deadline. Months is normal. Your weekly gap is the only number that counts.
- Skipping the split check. Without it, slow progress feels like none.

Your splits, and after

- Pick a day when you feel loose, and do your full warm-up and stretches first.
- Lower yourself slowly with your hands on books. Don't drop the last centimetre.
- Hold each side calmly for 30 seconds, breathing, then take your side photos.

After: flexibility you don't use fades. Harvard Health says you have to keep working on it to maintain it, so keep stretching at least two or three days a week, the ACSM minimum. From here you could add side splits, or work on strength to match your new range: the Build up to 100 push-ups and Do your first pull-up plans are good next steps, and the Improve your posture plan is a gentle one to pair with it.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Carry on with the current week, at the support height from your last split check.

Missed 2 weeks: Repeat the last week you finished in full, with your support one book higher than at your last check, then carry on. If that runs past your date, leave out an easy or repeat week, never the last four weeks.

Missed 3 weeks: Go back two weeks from where you stopped, start one or two books higher than your last check, and lower again only when it feels easy. If there are no longer enough weeks, enter a new date on the plan page.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Warm up, do a split check, and choose the level and week that match your gap today. Enter a new date on the plan page to see if it's realistic. If you stopped because of pain, see a doctor or physiotherapist before you start again.

Sources

Harvard Health Publishing
`https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-importance-of-stretching`
“All it takes to warm up the muscles before stretching is five to 10 minutes of light activity, such as a quick walk.”

Harvard Health Publishing
`https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-importance-of-stretching`
“Don't bounce, which can cause injury.”

Harvard Health Publishing
`https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-importance-of-stretching`
“It takes weeks to months to get flexible, and you'll have to continue working on it to maintain it.”

Harvard Health Publishing
`https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/six-tips-for-safe-stretches`
“Stretch only to the point of mild tension, never to the point of pain.”

Harvard Health Publishing
`https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/six-tips-for-safe-stretches`
“Much like taffy, muscles stretch more easily when warm.”

Harvard Health Publishing
`https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/six-tips-for-safe-stretches`
“You'll make the best gains if you stretch frequently—daily, or on as many days of the week as possible.”

American Family Physician (AAFP), summarising the American College of Sports Medicine position stand
`https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/1999/0115/p473.html`
“Static stretches should be held for 10 to 30 seconds.”

American Family Physician (AAFP), summarising the American College of Sports Medicine position stand
`https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/1999/0115/p473.html`
“The recommendations state that flexibility exercises two or three days a week should be incorporated into the fitness program.”

VICE (quoting a physical therapist at Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Sports Medicine Institute)
`https://www.vice.com/en/article/can-i-learn-to-do-a-split-in-one-week/`
“Garder said it takes months for most adults to achieve the splits.”

VICE (quoting a physical therapist at Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Sports Medicine Institute)
`https://www.vice.com/en/article/can-i-learn-to-do-a-split-in-one-week/`
““When we talk about long-term tissue change and flexibility, you usually see that over the course of six

months to a year, depending on the frequency of stretching and range of motion a person has," Gardner said."

VICE (quoting a sports medicine physician at Stanford Health Care)
`https://www.vice.com/en/article/can-i-learn-to-do-a-split-in-one-week/`
"Fredericson continued that "regular stretching" could be as simple as holding a stretch for 30 seconds and repeating it three times, daily."

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/joint-hypermobility/`
"Joint hypermobility syndrome is when you have very flexible joints (you may think of yourself as being double-jointed)."

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/joint-hypermobility/`
"The main treatment is improving muscle strength and fitness so your joints are better protected."

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/running-and-aerobic-exercises/how-to-warm-up-before-exercising/`
"This warm-up routine should take at least 6 minutes."

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/running-and-aerobic-exercises/how-to-warm-up-before-exercising/`
"Stop the exercise immediately if you feel any pain or become unwell."

HealthLink BC (Province of British Columbia)
`https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/living-well/physical-activity/preventing-injuries/precautions-flexibility-activities`
"Don't force a joint beyond a comfortable range of motion."

HealthLink BC (Province of British Columbia)
`https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/living-well/physical-activity/preventing-injuries/precautions-flexibility-activities`
"Avoid bouncing or jerking."

HealthLink BC (Province of British Columbia)
`https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/living-well/physical-activity/preventing-injuries/precautions-flexibility-activities`
"Do a brief warm-up before stretching, like a light walk."

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/symptoms/pins-and-needles/`
"Everyone can get pins and needles but see a GP if you keep getting it or it lasts a long time."

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/symptoms/pins-and-needles/`
"Pins and needles feels like a pricking, tingling or numbness sensation."

University of New Mexico (Len Kravitz, summarising the 2011 American College of Sports Medicine position stand)
`https://www.unm.edu/~lkravitz/Article%20folder/ACSMGuidelinesUNM.pdf`
"10-30 seconds of static stretching holds for most adults"

University of New Mexico (Len Kravitz, summarising the 2011 American College of Sports Medicine position stand)

https://www.unm.edu/~lkravitz/Article%20folder/ACSMGuidelinesUNM.pdf
“2-4 repetitions of each stretch is advocated”

University of New Mexico (Len Kravitz, summarising the 2011 American College of Sports Medicine position stand)
https://www.unm.edu/~lkravitz/Article%20folder/ACSMGuidelinesUNM.pdf
“Provide a total of 60 seconds of stretching time per target muscle group for any stretching method utilized”

This plan online	https://goaltodo.com/do-the-splits
Reach it with others on Welang	https://welang.com/goals
Reach it on your own in HourLife	https://www.hourlife.com

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.