



# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

DATE

DATE

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V Sit & Reach



Toe Touch



Forward Splits

L  
R



Center Splits



Trunk Rotation

L  
R



Trunk Extension



Back Scratch

L  
R



Shoulder Rotation



Straight Leg Raise

L  
R



Butterfly Stretch





# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## **Welcome to the Nerd Fitness Flexibility Benchmark Challenge!**

We've created this challenge to give you a clear, measurable starting point for a variety of common stretches. This will serve as your baseline to show progress as you embark on your journey to become a more fit and flexible nerd! We're firm believers of the mentality, "what gets measured gets improved," and we know the power of having pictures and exact measurements from day 1 so you can look back and see how far you've come.

We suggest you use this tracking sheet to record the 10 benchmarks **once a month for the next 4 months**. If you'd prefer to track over a longer period of time, try measuring every two months or three months! Keep in mind that progress and change take time, so we'd caution against testing more than once a month.

Print out this sheet and tape it up somewhere you'll remember, or save it to your computer and edit it as you go - whatever works for you. Over the next 5 days, we will be sending you details about how to complete these benchmarks. You will receive information about two measurements per day, with full written instructions and video about how to complete them.

We understand that you may be excited and want to jump ahead and do everything immediately, but we encourage you to take it slowly and follow our lead. This will help slowly ease you into a daily stretching habit that will actually stick!

If you want to do all of the benchmarks at once, we will be sending out a download on day 6 (the day after we send the last two benchmarks) that includes every single pose with all instructions. That way, if you can only get a friend to help for one day, you can do it all at once.

### **Last few things before we get started (IMPORTANT):**

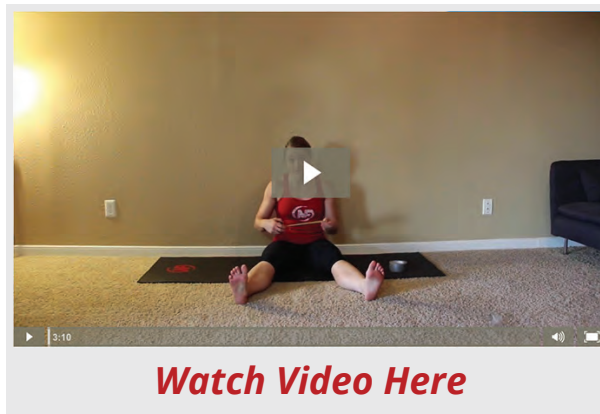
- **These are benchmark tests, not a workout or stretching plan.** A regular practice like yoga or active stretching that is focused on improving flexibility will create more long term results. We will include a few yoga poses that you can focus on if you're struggling with a specific benchmark.
- **Many of the stretches are far easier to record with a friend helping.** If you have no options to get a helper, still try your best to record accurately. If you can, have a friend take a photo; sometimes, small increases in measurements can reflect much more clearly in before and after photos. If you're on your own, one great tip is to record yourself doing the stretch using the camera on your phone (**Pro tip: I use my shoe as a tripod!**), and then screenshot the video to get a picture.
- **This isn't a competition**, this is a benchmark to show personal improvement in several areas over time. Remember: that which gets measured gets improved. Be honest with yourself!
- **Breathe slowly and steadily, and stretch slowly.** Jamming your arms forward to stretch an extra inch for a fraction of a second doesn't count. Stretch slowly until you cannot stretch further, breathe, and take the measurement there.
- If you need to measure a different way because it's easier for you, that's fine, as long as you **consistently use the same method every time**.
- You don't need to do a full workout before, but it's good to **do something light (a 5 minute walk, a few squats, jumping jacks, or knee pushups) just to get your blood flowing** and your body into motion before recording your benchmarks. Keep it light, but move a little before jumping in.
- **If it hurts or doesn't feel right, stop!** Stay safe. Don't push your body into places where it isn't comfortable. That's not the point here! Get a safe, comfortable starting measurement, especially on any of the following movements you don't do on a regular basis. Stretch slow, move slow, and use a friend to help if at all possible.
- The lawyers made us say it: please make sure that before you start any exercise or fitness program you **check with your doctor!**



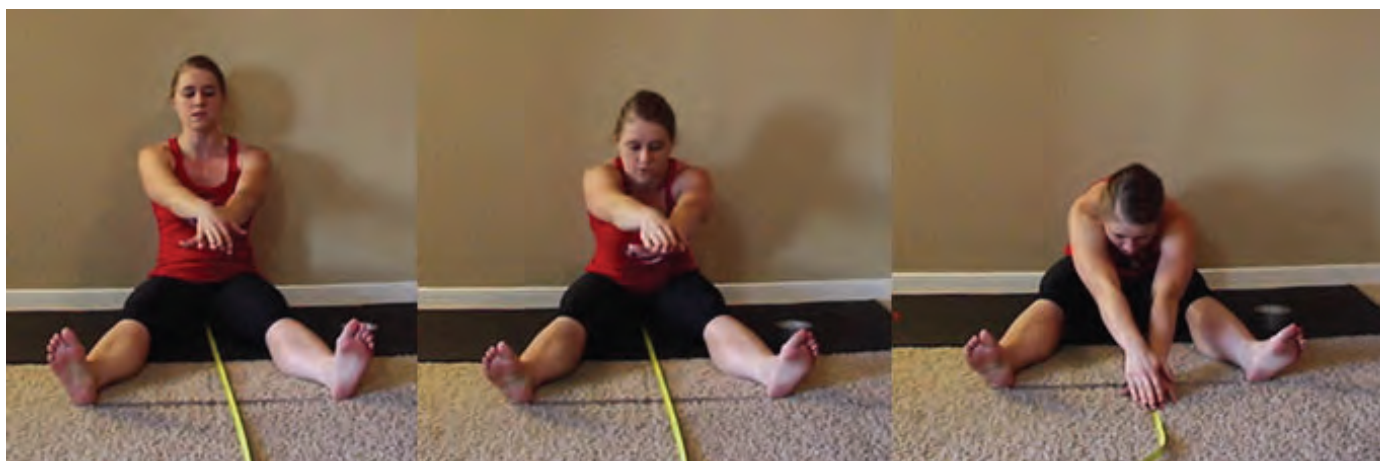
# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## Benchmark #1: V Sit and Reach

1. We recommend to set up for this you **put a piece of masking tape on the floor** to create a line from one heel to the other heel – in between the soles of your feet, though you can use anything (a string, yardstick, etc).
2. **Sit on the ground with your legs extended out in front of you.** Your feet should be about two feet apart (60 cm).
3. **Put one hand on top of the other hand** (it does not matter which one is on top). Make sure they are even (don't let one hand jet out in front of the other).
4. **Keep your legs straight and flex your feet so that your toes pointed straight up.** Also be sure to keep your knees straight, but not locked out or hyperextended – there is no need to jam them into the floor here!
5. **Reach forward and bring your fingers to the ground** and reach as far as you can comfortably hold. Reach a few times to get a good feel and hold your fingers down and still for a few seconds.



[Watch Video Here](#)



### You can measure one of two ways:

- Have a friend mark down how close you can get to the line between your heels (represented as a negative number if you can't reach over the line, and a positive number if you can reach over)
- Lay a yardstick or measuring tape down from your groin straight out on the floor, and measure how many inches (or cm) you get from your groin straight out.

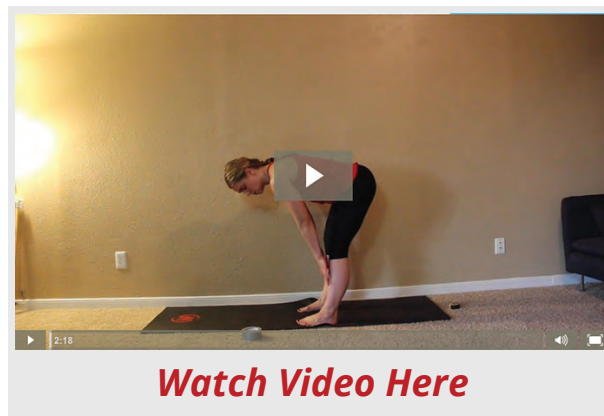
**Solo tip:** If you are by yourself you can use a piece of tape that you hold in the tip of your finger and press into the ground as close to the max reach as possible, and then measure the distance from the line after you get up.



# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## Benchmark #2: Toe Touch

1. **Stand straight with your legs about hip width apart.** You want your legs to be straight, but don't aggressively lock out your knees either – this feels slightly bent to a lot of people.
2. Begin by engaging the front of your legs (your quads) and **bending and leaning forward towards the ground.**
3. Let your body rest naturally, as if you were a ragdoll. Keeping your hands relatively close together, straighten your fingers and **begin to stretch down slowly to the ground.**
4. Do this 2-3 times to get warmed up. Try to keep your legs straight by flexing/activating your quads; keep your legs straight, without your knees locked. If you're not quite sure how to 'activate your quads', try putting a pillow between your legs and holding it there with your legs while you complete this movement!
5. Don't bend your knees to help you get closer to the ground either! I'm watching you. If you're videotaping yourself on these to track your progress, note that depending on your body (and your hamstrings) your legs may not look 100% straight. Don't lock your knees out to make them look straighter!
6. When you are ready, **reach towards the ground and hold it for a few seconds.**







# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

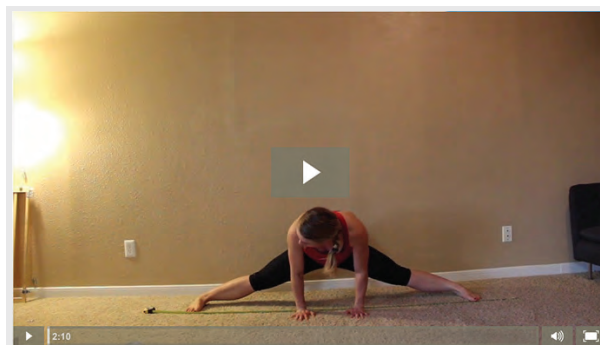
## You can measure one of two ways:

- If you aren't touching the ground, have a friend measure the distance from your tip of your fingers to the ground. If you don't have a friend with you, place your hands on your legs and note where the tips of your fingers end up.
- If you can touch the ground, you'll want to flatten your hands as much as possible, and record the distance from the top of your head to the ground. As you can stretch further, the top of your head will actually get closer and closer to the ground.
- If this seems easy, try hugging your calves and pulling your head in towards your body.

## **Benchmark #3: Center Splits**

**Note** – this is best done on a floor that is not slippery. If the floor you are on is too slippery, you could slide into a position that is further than your body wants to go, and you can hurt yourself. Carpet or a yoga mat is a great place for this.

1. **Slowly lower yourself into a comfortable squat**, placing both hands on the floor in front of you, and as you come down place your hands on the floor. As you place your hands on the floor in front of you, make sure to not shift your weight up onto your toes. You should be able to wiggle your toes throughout this entire pose.
2. **Very slowly walk both feet out to the side.** You can keep your hands on the ground to help with balance. Your goal is to stay consistent and even through both sides.
3. **As your feet slowly walk out, your legs should eventually straighten out to each side.** Your feet and toes should be facing straight forwards, or slightly outwards (away from your body).
4. **Stop at whatever height is comfortable**, and where you feel a slight stretch. **DO NOT** try to push yourself down or continue to slide your legs out past your body's limits.
5. Your back should stay tight, and your hips should stay in line with your legs (don't lean forward or back too far). Avoid rolling onto your ankles. If you feel yourself coming forward or backwards, it means you've reached your natural safe limit. Stop and record.



[\*\*Watch Video Here\*\*](#)



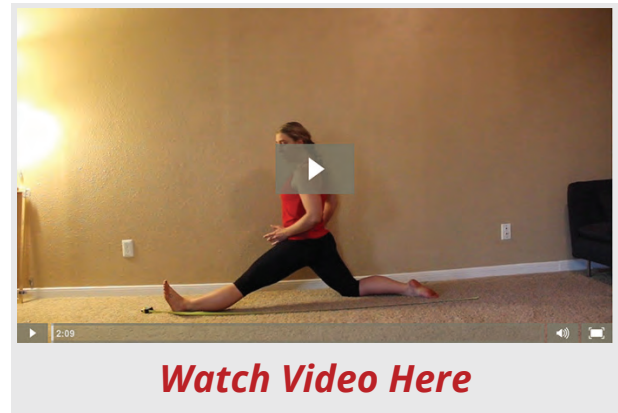
Have a friend record the distance between your heels or your toes. If you're doing this alone, lay a measuring tape down first, and note the distance before standing back up.



# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

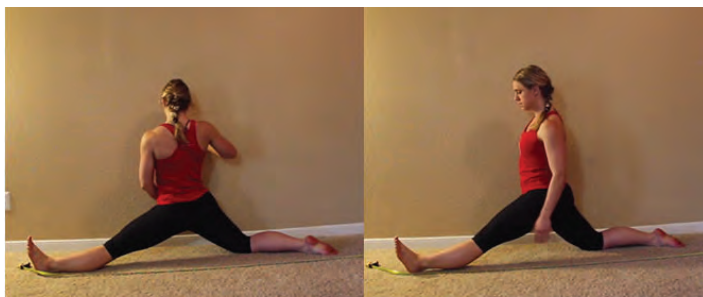
## Benchmark #4: Forward Splits

1. **Start by kneeling on the floor in a lunge position**, with one knee on the floor, and the other knee in front of you, with the forward knee bent at a 90 degree angle. (Basically – “take a knee”). If you are less flexible, it is helpful to do this right next to a wall to help you balance.
2. Making sure your hips stay facing forward, **slowly straighten your lead leg by gently sliding your foot forward**.
3. **Once your front leg is straight, continue to slowly slide the rest of your body (torso, hips and front foot) forward**, keeping your back knee in the same place. As you do this your body will lower deeper into a split.
4. As you get deeper into the split, your arms may touch the ground to help balance you. If the don't get to this point, you can use the wall next to you or a chair to help balance.
5. With the support of your hands, **continue to slide your body and lead leg forward until you find a comfortable spot**. If your hips start to open (and no longer face forward), that is your stopping point. (See image below)



[Watch Video Here](#)

Once again, DO NOT push yourself further down or move quickly (in or out) of the stretch. Stay comfortable.



INCORRECT - HIPS OPEN

CORRECT - HIPS FACING FORWARD

Have a friend record the distance between your heels or toes. If you're doing this alone, lay a measuring tape down first, and note the distance between your heels.

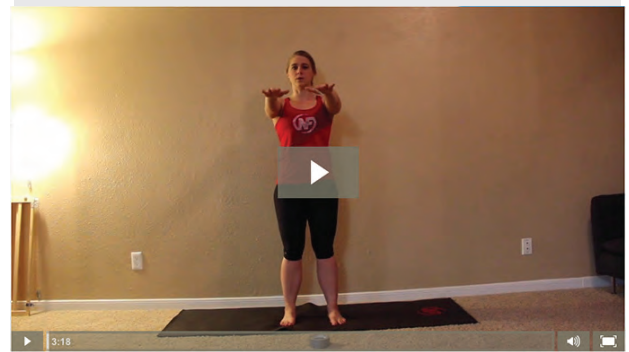
Repeat this measurement with the exact steps to your other side.



# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## Benchmark #5: Trunk Rotation

1. Start by **standing with your back facing a wall**, about a foot away from it. (Hint: you should be parallel to the wall)
2. Looking straight in front of you, **stick both arms out, parallel with the floor, exactly like a Zombie or Mummy**. You are going to keep your arms in this position throughout the entire test.
3. Keeping your feet firmly on the ground and keeping your arms out in front of you, **slowly turn your body to one side**.
4. As you turn, your whole body is able to turn, with the exception of your feet. **Your feet need to stay pointing naturally forward and firmly planted on the ground**. Do not let your weight shift off the center of your feet and onto the side of your feet.
5. As you turn to the side, **your lead arm will want to keep moving out** (and no longer be straight from your shoulder). **Don't let it!** Keep your arms straight out in front of you and rotate the core of your body instead.
6. **The fingertips of your lead arm should eventually touch the wall behind you**. If they don't, go back to your starting position, step closer to the wall, and start again. If you end up right up next to the wall, that's okay! If you hit the wall with your fingers before you have rotated as far as you can, go back to your starting position, step away from the wall, and try again.
7. Eventually **your fingertips will gently touch the wall right at your max rotation**.



[Watch Video Here](#)

**Once you've achieved this, have a friend measure the distance from your heels to the wall.** If you're on your own, use a piece of tape and stick it to the wall and then measure after you've stepped away.



**Repeat this measurement with the exact steps to your other side.**





# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## Benchmark #6: Trunk Extension

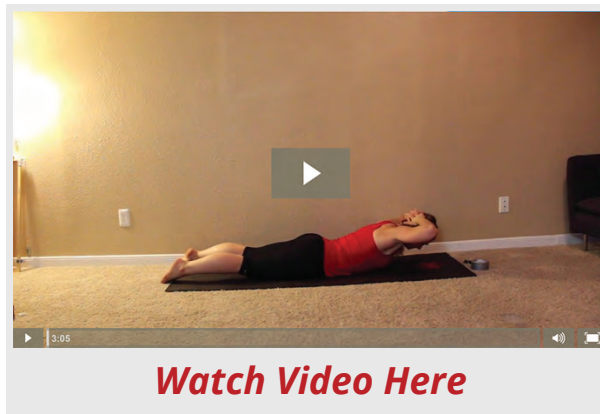
1. Start by **laying down with your stomach flat against the floor.**

**Bring your hands to the side of your head, with your fingers touching the back of head on each side.** Your arms will form a triangle on each side of your head.

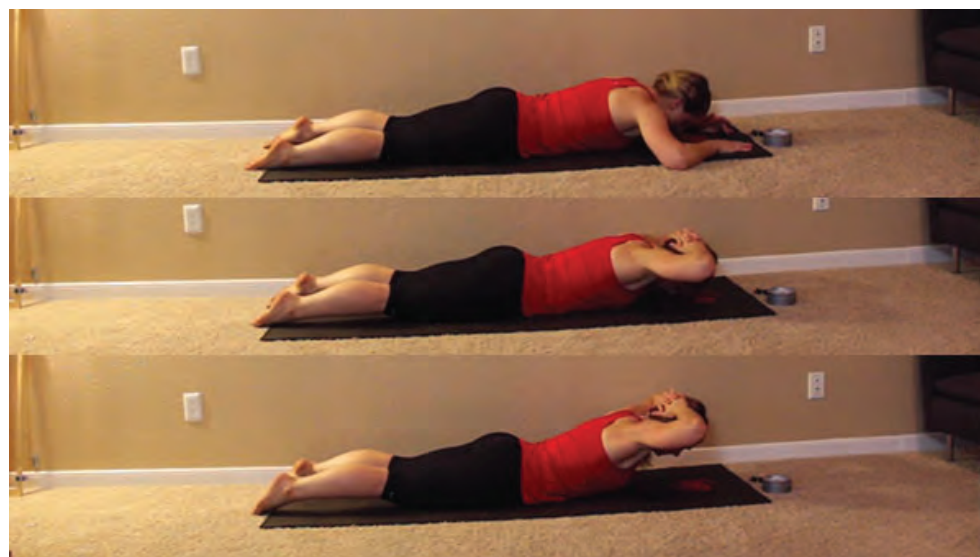
2. **Slowly raise your head and upper torso off the ground,** coming up as far as you can safely. Your head should stay neutral the entire time – that is, don't look up or look down as you come up. Keep your body tight and lift everything together off the floor.

3. As a part of this, **it's essential to keep your legs on the ground.** As you raise your torso, they will want to come up – it would be helpful to have a friend hold them down as you do the test. If you don't have someone with you to hold your legs down, you can put some weight on them, such as a bag of kitty litter or a backpack.
4. **Slowly lower yourself back down to the ground.** Do this 2-3 times to get used to the movement.

**Have a friend measure the distance between the tip of your nose and the ground as you hold a full extension for a few seconds. Don't look up to try to get a better measurement!**



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**If you can't hold the extension for several seconds with shaking or collapsing, that means you're trying to extend too far.** Measure from where you can hold for a few seconds firmly. Again, if your legs come up, you will get an inconsistent measurements!

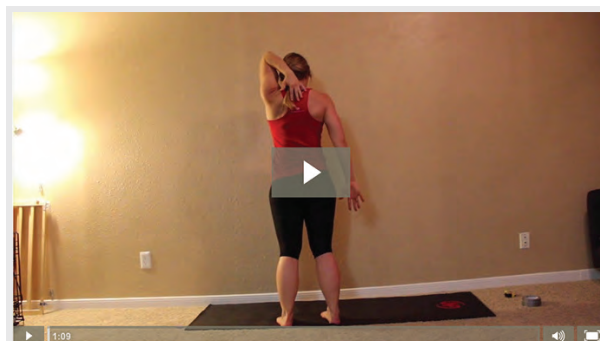




# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## Benchmark #7: Back Scratch

1. **Start by standing comfortably in any location.**
2. **Reach one arm over your head (straight up, parallel to the wall), and bend it at the elbow.** Bring your hand down, behind your head, towards the middle of your back until your fingers are pointing towards the floor. In this position, your elbow will be pointed in the air and your palm should rest against your back.
3. **Reach your other arm down towards the ground and bend it at the elbow.** Bring your hand (palm out) gently up the middle of your back. This elbow should stay pointed down and the back of your hand should gently slide up your back.
4. **At this point, the fingertips of your two hands may touch, or they may meet and overlap.** Whether they can touch or not, they should be pointing directly at each other.



[Watch Video Here](#)



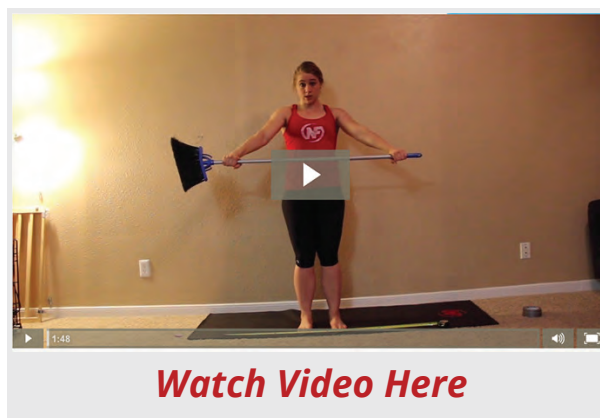
Have a friend measure the distance between your fingertips. If they don't yet overlap, record that as a negative number. If they already overlap, measure how much they overlap and record that as a positive number.



# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## **Benchmark #8: Shoulder Flexibility**

1. **Start by standing, holding a towel, pvc pipe, or long stick (a broom works) in front of your body.** Both hands should be holding on with an overhand grip and hands wide apart.
2. Keeping your grip constant and your arms straight, **slowly raise your arms and lift the (towel/pvc/broomstick) over your head.** Without changing your grip, continue to rotate your arms behind your back until you hit your lower back. If you can't do this, widen your grip and try again until you can.
3. Do this a few times to warm up. **Each time you hit your lower back, bringing your hands a little closer together** each time you rotate the object up and behind your back. Remember to keep your grip tight and your arms straight.
4. You are **looking to find the minimum distance your hands can be apart and still comfortably rotate the object behind your back.**
5. **The important word here is comfortably** – don't force a narrower grip than your body can handle!



**Measure the distance between the innermost part of your hands.**

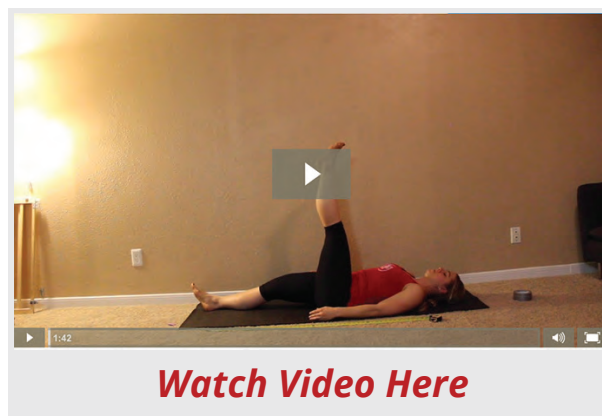




# FLEXIBILITY *Benchmark Challenge*

## Benchmark #9: Active Straight Leg Raise

1. Start by lying with your **back on the ground with your legs straight out in front of you**. Your toes should be facing up, and arms down to your side.
2. **Gently lift one leg, keeping the leg straight** and your toes in the same position as you lift it up.
3. The goal is to **lift your leg as far as you can** without bending at the knee or moving the other leg (the one still on the ground). As you lift one leg up, the other leg will naturally want to rotate and open up your range of motion even more – don't let it do that. Stop if you feel either leg rotating or either knee bending. Your legs should stay comfortably locked out (don't force it, but don't let them bend).



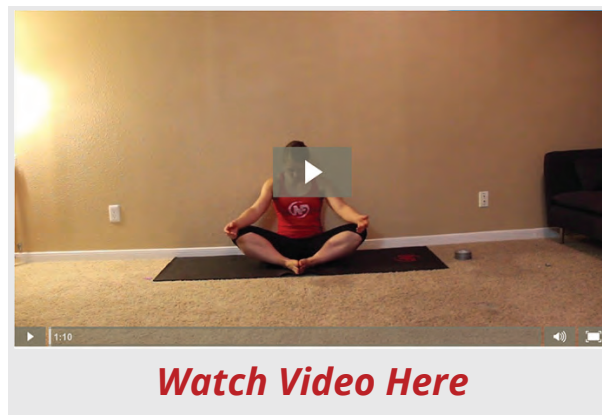
**Have a friend measure the distance between the bottom of your ankle or your foot and the floor.**

As you gain flexibility your leg will raise higher and this distance will increase. Repeat this measurement by following the exact steps with the other leg.

**Solo Tip:** While it's difficult to measure this alone, pictures and video from the side can clearly show the angle of your raised leg when extended to the fullest. This angle will be easy to see progress in as you improve.

## Benchmark #10: Butterfly Stretch

1. Sit on the floor **with your knees bent out in front of you**. Your feet should be flat on the floor.  
**Drop your knees to either side (outwards) and let the soles of feet come off the floor.** At this point the soles of your feet should be facing each other – press them together.
2. **Grab your feet with both hands and gently pull your ankles in towards your groin.** Go slow and make sure the soles of your feet remain touching throughout.
3. **Don't force the stretch with your arms**, use them to help gently guide you into a comfortable, fully stretched position. **You should be able to safely hold it for 4-5 seconds.**



**Measure the distance between your ankles and your groin.**

As you gain flexibility, you'll be able to comfortably get your ankles closer and closer to your groin.