

# **SynerStretch**

**For Total Body Flexibility**

*from Health For Life*

*Also by Health For Life:*

- **Legendary Abs**
- **Beyond Legendary Abs**  
A synergistic performance guide to Legendary Abs and SynerAbs
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Please Note:

This program contains exercises that, depending on your physical condition, may be hazardous to your health. Consult with your doctor before attempting these exercises. It is also important that you use care in performing the exercises in this book, since improper performance could result in injury.

User assumes all risk for performing the exercises described in this course. Use of this course constitutes a covenant not to bring any lawsuit or action for injury caused by performing exercises illustrated in this course.

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Since Health For Life was founded in 1981, we have received stacks of letters asking for a course that would do for stretching what our **Legendary Abs** and **SynerAbs** programs have done for abdominal conditioning: make it short, sweet (read "painless"), and effective.

Until recently, such a course just wasn't possible. But it *was* possible to take existing stretching technique and create a short, effective program for maintaining flexibility based on sound biomechanical and physiological principles. That program was **SynerStretch A**.

Originally designed for martial artists—who depend on extreme flexibility—**SynerStretch A** can also help bodybuilders, dancers, and other athletes stay flexible in less than seven minutes per workout. It's a great way to end a heavy training session of any kind.

**SynerStretch A** represents a useful refinement of *traditional* stretching methods. However, recent research into the physiology of muscle flexibility has provided the basis for a completely new approach. And from that approach, we have created **SynerStretch B**.

**SynerStretch B** is for everyone from beginners to advanced athletes. It is designed to help you **develop** flexibility. Through the application of a new technique—Isometric Agonist Contraction/Relaxation—**SynerStretch B** allows you to get loose in a matter of months, rather than years. As an added advantage, it eliminates much of the pain usually associated with stretching exercise.

Isometric stretching represents the state-of-the-art in flexibility work. It is radically different from any previous stretching method, so we ask you to approach it with an open mind!

Both **SynerStretch A** and **SynerStretch B** embody the concept of Synergism: producing a whole greater than just the sum of the parts. By structuring the routines to reflect certain important biomechanical principles, it is possible to produce a flexibility program much more effective than one born of a haphazard arrangement of exercises. The result: you get more limber in less time, and stay that way with less effort!

#### What's coming up:

##### 1. The Theory

- Factors Limiting Flexibility
- Stretching Methods
- The Latest Discovery: Isometric Stretching

##### 2. The Program

- The Exercises
- The Routines
- How Much, How Often

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## T H E O R Y

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### FACTORS LIMITING FLEXIBILITY

Although almost every devout health nut tells tales of some human rubber band who "has never stretched" and can easily do splits, put his legs behind his head, or perform other feats only possible for the extremely limber, it is actually a myth that some people are "generally" loose. Innate flexibility is specific to:

- a given joint or combination of joints (a person with loose hips doesn't necessarily have loose shoulders);
- the action performed at the joint (the ability to do front splits doesn't imply ability to do side splits even though both actions occur at the hip).

Several physiological factors limit your range of motion: *muscle mass*, for one. For example, heavily developed biceps interfere with bending the elbow, and large hamstrings limit knee flexion. Excess *fatty tissue* imposes a similar restriction. And at some joints, *bone structure* sets very definite limits on flexibility—no amount

of stretching exercise will ever allow you to hyperextend (bend past fully straightened) your knee or elbow.

These three factors play very little part in determining the range of motion of the hip, shoulder, and ankle, however. At these joints, movement is restricted mainly by soft tissue:

- muscle and its *facial sheaths* (the protective outer layer that binds the muscle fibers together);
- *connective tissue* (ligaments, tendons, joint capsules);
- skin.

Little can be done to change bone or muscle structure, but you can—and should—increase your flexibility by doing any of several kinds of exercises designed to reduce the internal resistance offered by soft tissue. A few minutes of flexibility work is a small price to pay for improved circulation, freedom from many of the aches and pains that grow common with age, more graceful movement, and, of course, enhanced athletic performance!

## METHODS OF STRETCHING

### Static vs. Ballistic Stretching

Remember back in elementary school when your P.E. teacher told you to bob up and down as you tried to touch your toes? This, and other exercises where you bob, bounce, or jerk in an attempt to loosen up are lumped under the heading **Dynamic or Ballistic Stretching**. Conversely, the passive limbering method where you lock the joints involved, assume a position that puts a muscle group on the stretch (at greatest possible length and under pressure), and then stay in that position for a period of time is called **Static Stretching**. (Example: locking your knees, bending forward at the waist, grabbing your knees, and trying to slowly pull your chest to your knees.)

**Dynamic Stretches = Ballistic Movements**  
bouncing, bobbing, kicking, etc.

**Static Stretches = Passive Stretches**  
muscle on a stretch, slow, even pressure

Tests have found both methods equally effective for increasing flexibility, but static stretching has several unique advantages:

- there is less chance of going too far too fast and thus less danger of straining tissue;
- energy requirements are lower;
- where dynamic stretching is apt to cause muscular soreness, the passive method will actually prevent it. In fact, loosening up with static stretching after strenuous exercise will ease the soreness that follows over-exertion. (Next time you run sprints, stretch your calves, hamstrings, and quadriceps to finish your workout. You won't believe how good your legs feel the next day.)

The ballistic nature of dynamic stretching actually works against the purpose of the exercise, interfering with your efforts to limber up. Think about it: If you bob up and down while trying to touch your toes, you don't consciously tell yourself to go down so far, then straighten up, then go down again, and so on. The bouncing action is **reflex**—involuntary movement controlled by your nervous system; you trigger the same type of unthinking response if you

accidentally touch a hot stove. The reflex that induces the bounce is called the **myotatic reflex**. It tells your muscles to contract when they're stretched. That contraction is proportional to the amount and rate of stretching, which just means that if you bounce hard to touch your toes, your muscles will tense violently to stop you. This arresting action is clearly undesirable when you're exercising to improve your flexibility.

*Static* stretching, on the other hand, minimizes the effect of the myotatic reflex and allows you to exercise without having to fight your muscle action.

The sustained pull of the passive method has another advantage. If the pulling force is great enough, it triggers a second reflex—the **inverse myotatic reflex**—that actually prevents the muscle under stretch from contracting ("inhibits" the muscle) and keeps it relaxed.

To review—Two reflexes are called into play when you stretch: First, the myotatic reflex, which makes your muscles contract if you stretch quickly or suddenly, and second, the inverse myotatic reflex, which stops your muscles from contracting when they are subjected to a slow, passive stretch. Dynamic stretching triggers the myotatic reflex, forcing you to try to stretch tensed muscles. Static stretching barely triggers the myotatic reflex at all. It triggers the inverse myotatic reflex, which inhibits muscle contraction and makes it easier to stretch. Clearly, static stretching is the better of the two methods.

**SynerStretch A** is based on static stretching. Later, we will discuss some other factors that contribute to that program's effectiveness. But first, news of a breakthrough...

### Isometric Stretching

**SynerStretch A** is an extremely effective program based on the best of the traditional methods of stretching. **SynerStretch B**, however, represents a radical departure from established methods. The technique on which it is based, Isometric Agonist Contraction/Relaxation, has grown from our increased understanding of certain nuances of muscle physiology.

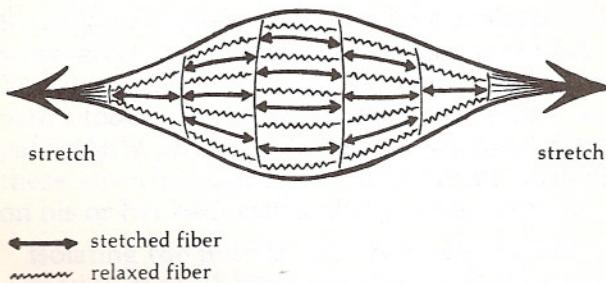
It all begins with fibers. Every muscle is made of millions of tiny **muscle fibers**. Each fiber can be in any of three states: resting, contracted, or stretched. When stimulated, individual resting

muscle fibers contract. This is like throwing a light switch—a fiber is either contracted, or it isn't; there's no such thing as a "partially contracted" fiber. In more technical terms, we say individual muscle fibers cannot vary the intensity of their contraction relative to the load against which they are acting. To compensate for the wide variety of possible load conditions, the central nervous system activates only the number of fibers necessary to perform the job at hand—few fibers activated for playing the piano; more for lifting weights; still more in the exceptional situation of the mother lifting a car to save her trapped son or daughter.

So when you contract a muscle, some of the fibers contract, and some remain at rest.

Likewise, when you stretch a muscle, some of the fibers lengthen, and some remain at rest. Picture little pockets of fibers distributed throughout the muscle body stretching, and other fibers simply going along for the ride. Just as the total strength of a contracting muscle is a result of the number of fibers contracting, the total length of a stretched muscle is a result of the number of fibers stretched—the more fibers stretched, the more length developed by the muscle for a given stretch.

Passive Stretch



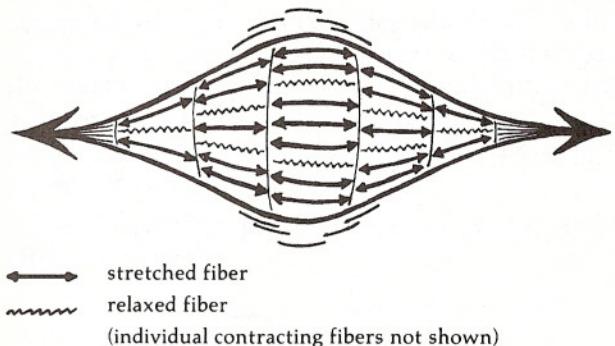
O.K. Let's go back to muscle contraction and fill out the picture a bit.

If you try to do a standard bicep curl with a weight you can lift, you get what's called an "isotonic" bicep contraction, which is just a fancy way of saying your muscle contracted and shortened overall.

On the other hand, if you plant yourself firmly and push against a wall, the muscle involved—the triceps—can't shorten overall and you have what's called an "isometric" contraction.

Now things get interesting. Remember that only some of the millions of fibers activate when you try to contract. What's happening to the other fibers? During an isotonic contraction, not much. They remain in the resting state as the contractile tension within the muscle is released by motion. But during an *isometric contraction*, there is no motion to release the tension. So you have some resting fibers being pulled on from both ends by fibers trying to contract. The result? Some of those resting fibers *stretch!*

Isometric Stretch



Under normal conditions, the stretching that occurs during an isometric contraction is not noticeable. However, it's possible to create an exercise in which this effect is quite pronounced.

Consider what would happen if you were to put a muscle on a stretch—even a light, painless one—and then do an isometric contraction:

Before you contracted, some of the fibers would be stretched already as a result of the light, static stretch; others would be at rest. Also, the static stretch would activate the inverse myotatic reflex, which would inhibit the fibers being stretched (stop them from contracting).

When you isometrically contracted, some of the resting fibers would contract, many of the remaining resting fibers would stretch, and many of the already stretched fibers, which are being prevented from contracting by the inverse myotatic reflex, would stretch even more. When the isometric contraction was relaxed and the contracted fibers returned to their resting length, the stretched fibers would retain their ability to stretch beyond their normal limit. Result—the whole muscle would be able to stretch beyond its initial maximum, and you would have increased flexibility without having done a single traditional stretch exercise!

Tests have shown isometric stretching to be considerably more effective than either passive or dynamic stretching. Not only does it yield almost immediate results (you should feel the difference after only a few stretching sessions), it also circumvents much of the pain usually associated with stretching.

Isometric stretching forms the basis of **SynerStretch B**. The technique is so effective

almost any isometric stretch will feel like some sort of miracle. And many traditional stretches can be reworked into isometric stretches. Indeed, **SynerStretch A** (for maintenance) and **SynerStretch B** (for increasing flexibility) use basically the same movements, except "A" employs passive stretches and "B" employs isometric stretches.

## EXERCISE SELECTION AND ORDER

We turn now from the generalities of stretching "method" to the specifics of individual exercises. Three basic qualities determine the effectiveness of a stretching exercise: isolation, leverage, and risk.

### Isolation

If you lift weights as part of your training, you are probably familiar with the concept of isolating individual muscle groups. A good weight exercise focuses on one muscle group, eliminating as many "supporting" muscles as possible. This guarantees the muscle you are training will take the brunt of the strain, and will be stressed adequately using relatively lighter weights (since no supporting or contributing muscles are helping out).

The same principle applies to stretching. A good stretch isolates the muscle you want to work. This eliminates having to overcome the resistance offered by multiple muscle groups. For example, you are better off with one-legged hamstring stretches than with the two-legged kind. During the standard two-legged stretch—bending forward, either standing or sitting, to touch your toes—you are working against: both spinal erectors (lower back), both gluteus muscles (buttocks), both hamstrings, and if you grab your toes, your calf muscles as well! Not particularly effective. In fact, a beginner doing these stretches usually needs someone pushing on his or her back just to do the exercise at all.

Isolating the muscle you are trying to stretch gives you control. Since you are working against the resistance offered by only one muscle group, you can vary the intensity of the stretch from a mild pull to the point at which pain prevents you from continuing.

Isolation allows focused, controlled stretching.

### Leverage

The most effective stretches provide the greatest mechanical advantage over the muscle to be stretched. Like isolation, good leverage makes it easier to overcome the substantial resistance offered by inflexible muscles.

Many borderline stretching exercises can be made effective by adjusting them to provide improved leverage. One example: when doing a seated hamstring stretch (see illustration), you increase your leverage by (1) stretching only 1 leg at a time—this decreases resistance; (2) doing the exercise seated on the edge of a bench—this rotates your pelvis in such a way as to increase the level of stretch inherent in just sitting in the position; and (3) grabbing *the bench* as close to your toes as possible—this increases the length of your lever.

Good leverage provides for an easier, more effective stretch.



"Seated  
Hamstring  
Stretch"

### Risk

Even an exercise offering great leverage and isolation may be a candidate for the discard pile—because many otherwise good stretches subject joints to potentially injurious stresses. Some of these exercises involve rotations that can strain ligaments or tendons. Others put pressure on vertebral disks and can lead to lower back problems. Still others call for twists or turns that can cause problems in areas unrelated to the stretch.

The backbend is a classic example. Although the exercise is intended to promote "spinal flexibility," the main muscle group that gets stretched is the abdominals! Result: a disposition toward sway-back—that excessive curvature of the lower spine that may lead to disc problems, or at least, to chronic back pain.

Given the number of stretches to choose from, there is no reason to use mechanically unsound exercises. In selecting exercises for the **SynerStretch** programs, we have eliminated many standard stretches based on their potential to injure you.

\* \* \*

*By choosing exercises for best leverage, greatest degree of isolation, and lowest potential risk, and by modifying those exercises to maximize leverage and isolation, we guarantee ourselves effective "pieces" from which to build the **SynerStretch** programs. However pieces do not make a program. We still need some guidelines for putting those exercises together, guidelines like the Principle of Interdependency of Muscle Groups...*

## THE INTERDEPENDENCY OF MUSCLE GROUPS

Research has demonstrated there is one particular sequence of a given series of exercises that affords maximum benefit to all muscles involved. It doesn't matter if you are talking about weight lifts, stretches, or combining different types of aerobic exercise. That ideal sequence makes the exercises more effective in combination than those very same exercises performed individually. This is *Synergism*: combining elements to create a whole greater than a mere sum of the parts.

The ideal order of a series of exercises is partly defined by a principle called "The Interdependency of Muscle Groups." Let us explain it this way:

In the previous section, we advised *isolating* the muscle group you want to stretch to allow greater control and focus. This is an effective way to increase the efficiency of a stretch workout. Certain muscle groups, though, cannot be isolated—the hamstrings, for instance. Because you have to extend your leg to put the hams on a stretch, there will always be some resistance offered by your calf. In fact, most hamstring stretches—even the one-legged kind—involve your spinal erectors (lower back) and gluteus (buttock) muscles as well; those muscle groups are *interdependent*.

HAMSTRING STRETCHES INVOLVE



HAMSTRINGS, CALVES, LOWER BACK, BUTTOCKS

If you were to begin a lower body stretch workout with hamstring stretches, you would have to fight the resistance offered by all those muscle groups.

It is possible, though, to do exercises that isolate the calves, and the lower back and buttocks.

CALF STRETCHES INVOLVE → CALVES

LOWER BACK/BUTTOCK STRETCHES INVOLVE



LOWER BACK/BUTTOCKS

If instead of beginning with hamstring stretches you first do the individual calf, lower back, and buttock stretches, and *then* do hamstring stretches, you considerably lower the resistance offered by those muscles groups during your hamstring stretches.

This same principle applies to certain chest, or pectoral exercises. A very effective chest stretch involves not only the chest muscles, but the bicep and front shoulder muscles as well.

CHEST STRETCH  
INVOLVES

→ CHEST, FRONT SHOULDERS, AND BICEPS

If you do individual stretches isolating the front shoulders and biceps before you stretch your chest, you lower the resistance offered by those muscle groups, allowing your chest to get maximum benefit from the chest stretch.

By organizing the exercises within a stretch routine according to the Principle of Interdependency of Muscle Groups, you minimize the effort required to perform the routine and maximize the effectiveness of the individual exercises.

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

We now have the elements necessary to put together an effective stretch program.

As methods, we will use *passive* stretching for **SynerStretch A** and *isometric* stretching for **SynerStretch B**.

Exercises will be selected for greatest leverage and isolation and lowest potential risk of injury. (Of the thousands of stretch exercises that meet this criteria, our researchers have made the final selection for the **SynerStretch** program based on over six years of experimentation and analysis.) The exercises selected will be modified to further improve leverage and isolation, and to decrease risk.

Finally, exercises will be combined into routines based on the Interdependency of Muscle Groups.

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## PROGRAM SECTION

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### THE EXERCISES

The exercises described below combine to form SynerStretch A and SynerStretch B. You will probably be familiar with "generic" forms of some of them. But remember—the critical elements here are the specific exercises selected, the specific exercise sequence, the details pertaining to exercise performance, and most important, the revolutionary technique of isometric stretching incorporated into SynerStretch B.

Not all the stretches illustrated below are included in both routines. In some cases, we have provided both one- and two-person versions of the same stretch to give you maximum versatility. Certain SynerStretch B stretches require two people, however.

In the following explanations, the material that spans both columns is applicable to both SynerStretch A and B. Single-column information applies to one or the other as marked.

### LOWER BODY STRETCHES

#### One-Person Seated Groin Stretch

*groin, spinal erectors*

Sit with your heels pulled in as closely as possible to your groin and the soles of your feet flat against one another (see figure A-1 on next page). Then:

##### SynerStretch A

1. Hold your insteps with both hands, place your elbows in the "crooks" of your knees, and, for about a minute, gently try to push your knees to the floor (Fig. A-2). Try to relax as you push. Go with your breathing—each time you exhale, try to feel your groin muscles getting longer and more relaxed.

After a minute or so, slowly release the pressure. Don't get discouraged if your knees are high off the floor to begin with. This stretch is difficult.

2. Keeping your back straight, hold your feet with both hands and gently pull your upper body forward and down (Fig. A-3). Don't look at the floor while you stretch—it's too easy to lessen the effect of the exercise by letting your back curve. Once again, go with your breathing. After a minute or so, release the pressure slowly.

##### SynerStretch B

Hold your insteps with both hands and place your elbows in the "crooks" of your knees (Fig. A-2). Keep your back straight. Push down gently with your elbows to put your groin muscles on a stretch. The stretch should *not* be intense enough to be painful. Lock your arms to hold this stretched position.

Now for the isometric stretch: tense your "groin" muscles so you are pushing up with your legs against your elbows. Keep pushing down with your elbows to resist the upward thrust of your legs. **No motion should occur.** The upward push should be intense, but not painful. Hold for thirty seconds, maintaining the intensity of the isometric contraction. Then slowly relax.

Keeping your legs relaxed, grab your thighs and slowly bring your knees together. This will totally relieve the stretch on the groin muscles.

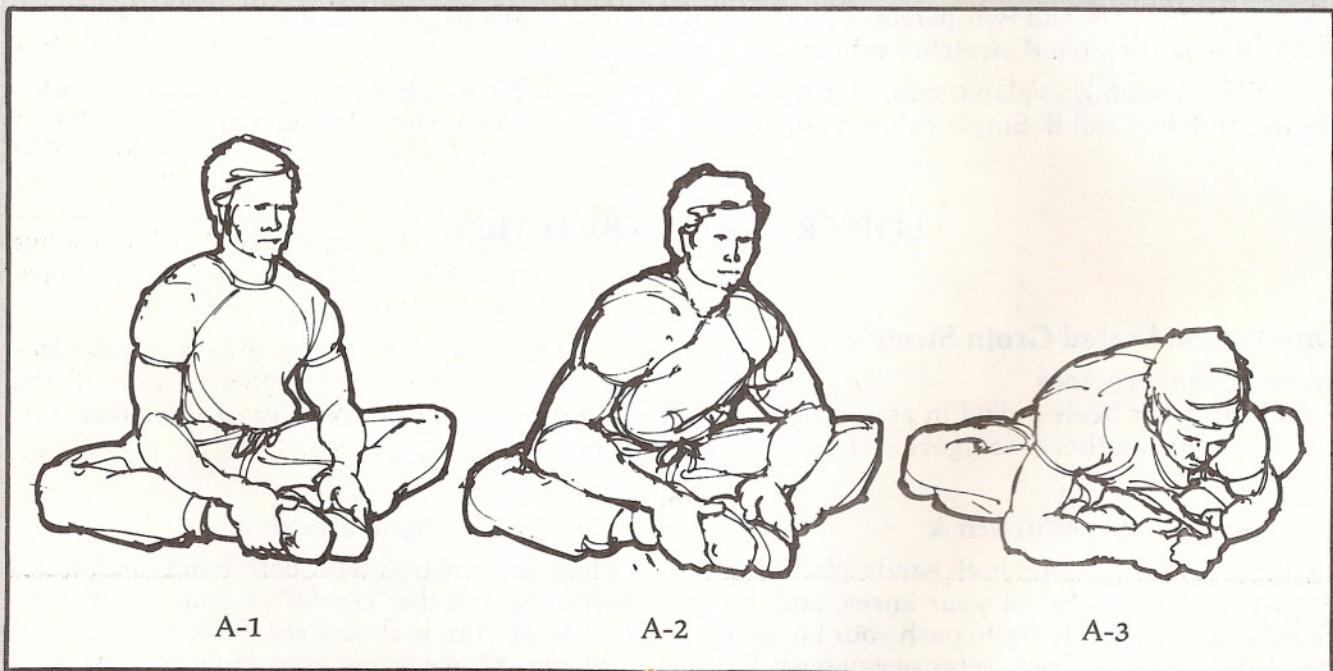
*SynerStretch A (continued)*

3. Combine steps 1 and 2 by pushing your knees down to maximum stretch and then trying to lean forward. You should eventually be able to touch your chest to the floor. After about 30 seconds, release the pressure.

*SynerStretch B (continued)*

Rest no longer than a second or two, then lower your legs back into the position illustrated in Figure A-1. Once again, gently push down with your elbows. Even after just this one repetition, you should find that it takes less pressure to do a gentle stretch, and that your knees go down more easily—and go down further—than before!

Repeat the entire isometric stretch procedure two more times for a total of three repetitions.



A-1

A-2

A-3

## One-Person Lying Buttock/Lower Back Stretch

*directly: spinal erectors, gluteus*

*indirectly: hamstrings*

Lie on your back and bring the soles of your feet together directly above your groin. Stick your arms through the "hole" created by your body and legs. Then wrap your arms up and around your ankles (Fig. B-1).

### SynerStretch A

Slowly push down with your elbows on the inside of your thighs right behind your knees. You should feel the stretch where the backs of your legs join your buttocks, and to some extent in your lower back. As always, go with your breathing.

Hold for a minute, then release.

### SynerStretch B

Push down gently with your elbows on the inside of your thighs right behind your knees. The stretch should *not* be intense enough to be painful. You should feel it where the backs of your legs join your buttocks and to some extent in your lower back. Lock your arms to hold this stretched position.

Now, contract your buttocks and hamstrings so you are pushing up against your elbows with the undersides of your legs. Keep pushing down with your arms so *no motion occurs*. Increase the strength of the push until it is intense but not painful. Maintain the pressure for thirty seconds, then slowly relax.

Remove your arms from between your legs and bring your knees together to take all the pressure off. Rest no more than a second.

Repeat the entire procedure two more times for a total of three reps.



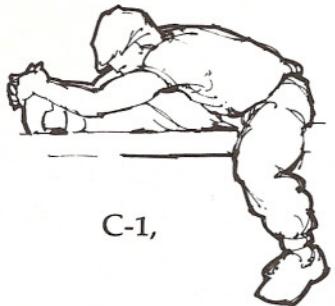
B-1

## One-Person Seated Calf/Hamstring Stretch *calves, hamstrings*

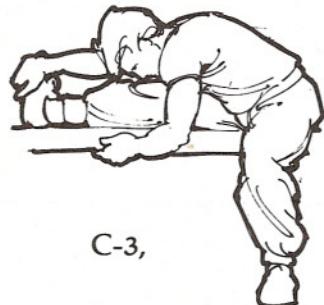
Sit on a table with your right leg extended along the edge and your left leg acting as a balance support. The table should be tall enough to allow almost full extension of your supporting leg.

### SynerStretch A

1. Grab the ball of your foot with both hands; bend your knee slightly, even if you don't have to. Make sure your foot is supinated—rolled inward (Fig. C-1). Pull back on the ball of your foot while simultaneously trying to straighten your leg. You should feel the stretch primarily in your calf but also to some extent in your hamstrings. Hold for thirty seconds, then release. **Do not let your foot rotate outward (à la flat feet) during the stretch.** This encourages excessive ankle pronation and can lead to a variety of postural difficulties.
2. Reach forward as far as possible and grab the bench (if you are using one, or your right heel, if not) with both hands. Gently pull yourself down toward your leg. Keep your head up, your back and leg straight, and try to touch your chest to your knee (Fig. C-2). Hold for 30 seconds, then release.
3. This is similar to step 1, but in this case, the focus is your hamstrings rather than your calves.



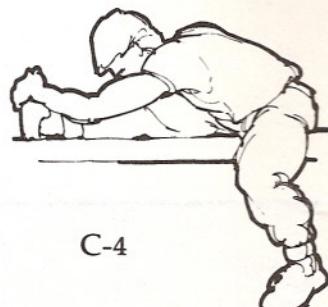
C-1,



C-3,



C-2,



C-4

### SynerStretch B

1. Grab the ball of your foot with both hands; bend your knee slightly, even if you don't have to. Make sure your foot is supinated—rolled inward (Fig. C-1). Pull back on the ball of your foot while simultaneously trying to straighten your leg. Lock yourself in position when you begin to feel the stretch in your calf. You will also feel it to some extent in your hamstrings.

Try to point your toe by tensing your calf. You should push hard, but not so hard that the contraction is painful. Pull back hard enough with your arms to keep any motion from occurring. Maintain the contraction for thirty seconds, then slowly relax. Release the ball of your foot and gently point your toe.

After a second or two, repeat the entire procedure for a total of three reps with one leg, followed by three reps with the other.

**Do not let your foot rotate outward (à la flat feet) during the stretch.** This encourages

#### *SynerStretch A (continued)*

Bring your right hand around the inside of your right ankle and grab the ball of your foot; bend your leg, if necessary. Make sure your foot is supinated—rolled inward—slightly. Now pull the ball of your foot toward you (Fig. C-3). You should feel the stretch behind your knees, along the outside of your calf, at the junction of your leg and buttock, and possibly in your lower back. Hold for thirty seconds, then release.

4. Repeat step 3 but this time grab your right foot with your left hand. Rotate your instep inward as before (Fig. C-4). This increases the intensity of the stretch overall, and also involves your gluteus (buttock) muscles. Hold for thirty seconds, then release.

Repeat all four steps with your other leg.

#### **Two-Person Lying Hamstring Stretch hamstrings**

##### **SynerStretch A**

This exercise is not suitable for the passive stretch technique.

##### *SynerStretch B (continued)*

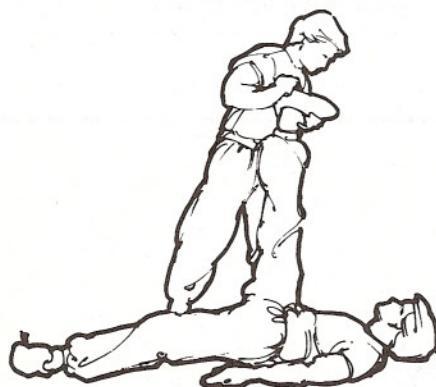
excessive ankle pronation and can lead to a variety of postural difficulties.

2. Reach forward as far as possible and grab the bench (if you are using one, or your right heel, if not) with both hands. Gently pull yourself down toward your leg. Stop and lock yourself into position when you begin to feel the stretch. Keep your head up, your back and leg straight (Fig. C-2). Now, tense your hamstrings as if you were trying to push your leg down through the bench. The push should be intense, but not painful. Hold for thirty seconds, then relax. Bend your leg for a second or so to relieve the stiffness from the exercise.

Repeat the entire procedure for a total of three reps with one leg, followed by three reps with the other.

##### **SynerStretch B**

Lie on your back with your legs extended out in front of you. Have your partner raise your right leg. He or she should stop raising it when you begin to feel the stretch in your hamstrings (Fig. D-1). Do Not Bend Your Leg (Fig. D-2).



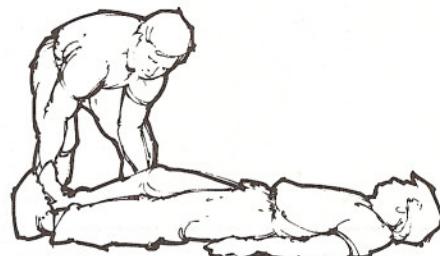
D-1, Right



D-2, Wrong



D-3,



D-4

### *SynerStretch B (continued)*

Tense your right hamstrings, pushing against your partner's hip. Your partner should be braced well enough so that *no motion occurs*. Your push should be intense, but not painful.

Maintain the isometric contraction for about 30 seconds, then relax.

Let your partner bend your leg at the knee (Fig. D-3), lower it to the ground, straighten it out (Fig. D-4), and then bring it back into position in preparation for the next repetition. Even after just this one rep, you should be able to bring your leg up higher before you begin to feel the stretch!

Repeat for a total of three reps with the right leg, followed by three reps with the left.

### ***One-Person Lying Groin Stretch***

*groin, tendon running down inside of leg next to knee*

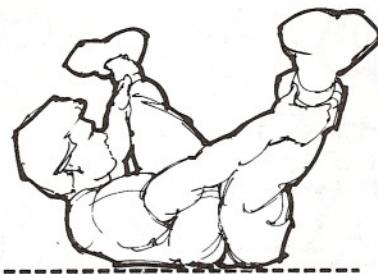
Lie on your back with your legs pointing straight up in the air. Slowly spread your legs to the sides (Fig. E-1). Your lower body should be at a right angle to your torso.

#### **SynerStretch A**

Reach up, grab your shins, and gently pull down to increase the stretch. Make sure you keep your knees locked straight. Go with your breathing for about a minute, then slowly release the pressure.

#### **SynerStretch B**

This exercise is not suitable as an isometric stretch. Isometrically contracting the "groin muscles" while holding the position by grabbing calves or ankles would put potentially damaging stress on your knee ligaments.



E-1

## Two-Person Seated Groin Stretch *groin*

### SynerStretch A

The passive stretch version of this exercise is more intense than necessary for a maintenance routine, so we don't recommend it.

### SynerStretch B

Sit on the ground in front of your partner with your legs spread just to the point at which you begin to feel the stretch in your groin (and probably in the tendons running along the inside of your leg near your knee). Have your partner slip his/her feet under your legs next to your knees, on the groin side (Fig. F-1). As an alternative, you can have your partner sit in front of you and place his/her feet against your legs just below your knees (Fig. F-2). If you choose the alternative position, don't let your partner apply pressure at your calves or ankles; an isometric stretch in this position puts too much pressure on your knee ligaments.

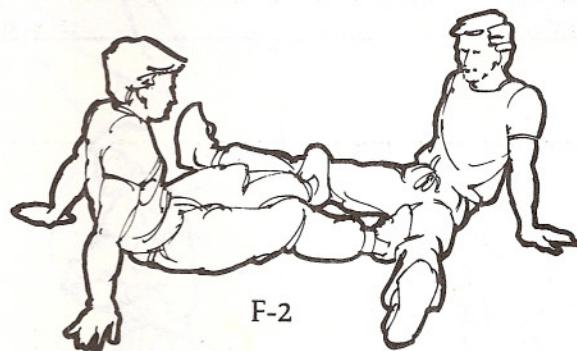
Tense your "groin muscles" by pushing in on your partners legs. The push should be intense, but not painful. Maintain pressure for 30 seconds, then slowly relax.

Have your partner grab the balls of your feet and bring your legs together (Fig. F-3).

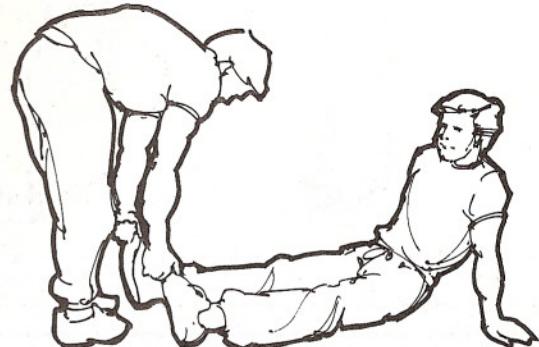
Repeat the entire procedure three times. Each time you spread your legs, you should find they go a bit further than during the previous rep!



F-1



F-2



F-3

## UPPER BODY STRETCHES

### One-Person Side/Rear Shoulder Stretch *posterior and lateral deltoid heads*

Stand up straight. Bend your right elbow, place the back of your right wrist against your ribs, and rotate the elbow forward (Fig. G-1).

#### SynerStretch A

Hold your upper arm with your free hand and gently pull across and down (Fig. G-2, G-3). When you reach maximum stretch, maintain pressure for about five seconds and then slowly release. Keep your shoulder down throughout the exercise.

Repeat with your other arm.

#### SynerStretch B

Hold your upper arm with your free hand and gently pull across and down (Fig. G-2, G-3). Stop when you feel the stretch. Lock your arms in this position. Tense your shoulder so you are pushing out against your hand; the push should be intense, but not painful. Be careful during this one. You have substantial leverage against your shoulder muscles and could injure yourself if you push too hard. Keep pushing for 10 seconds, then relax.

Straighten your arm out for a second or so, then repeat the entire procedure. Do a total of three reps with one arm, followed by three reps with the other.

Keep your shoulder down throughout the exercise.



G-1



G-2 (side view)



G-3 (front view)

## One-Person Bicep/Front Shoulder Stretch

*bicep, anterior deltoid head*

### SynerStretch A

Find something you can grab onto that runs horizontally above the floor at about shoulder height. This could be the top of a piece of exercise equipment in the gym, or the top of your refrigerator at home.

Extend your arms out behind you. Grab onto the bar (or lean your wrists against the top of the refrigerator)(Fig. H-1). Keeping your back as upright as possible, sink down, feeling for the stretch in your biceps and front shoulder. If you are using a refrigerator, keep your buttocks against it. You should relax your arms throughout the exercise. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Release.

### SynerStretch B

Your biceps don't require the high power of isometric stretching to limber up. You should use the passive SynerStretch A exercise for those muscles.



H-1

## Two-Person Bicep/Front Shoulder Stretch

*bicep, anterior deltoid head*

### SynerStretch A

This one is identical to the One-Person Bicep/Front Shoulder Stretch, except that your partner takes the place of the exercise bar or refrigerator.

Stand in front of your partner, facing away. Bend forward, and bend your knees. Extend your arms out behind you, palms facing in. Have your partner reach underneath your arms, palms forward, and take your wrists into the "Vs" formed by his/her thumbs and index fingers (Fig I-1).

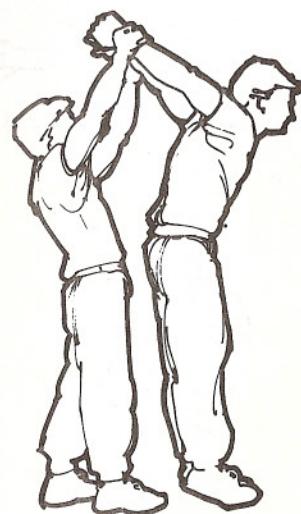
Now, *slowly* straighten up both at your knees and waist. At the same time, have your partner *slowly* push up on your wrists (Fig. I-2). Hold at peak stretch for 10 seconds, then release.

### SynerStretch B

Your biceps don't require the high power of isometric stretching to limber up. You should use the passive SynerStretch A exercise for those muscles.



I-1



I-2

## One-Person Chest/Front Shoulder Stretch

*pectoralis, anterior deltoid head*

### SynerStretch A

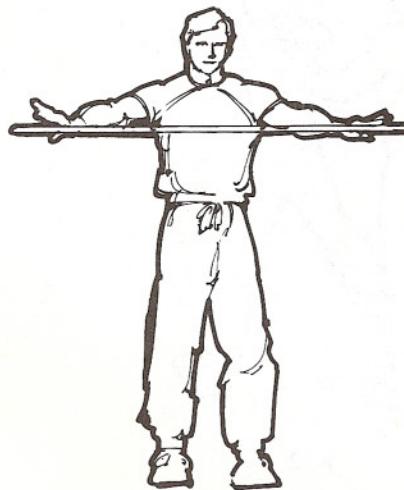
Stand up straight and grip a 6' pole close to the ends with your palms facing out (Fig. J-1). Keeping your arms locked straight, bring the pole up over your head and down behind you. Stop just below the range within which you feel the stretch (Fig. J-2).

Reverse the motion: keeping your arms locked straight, bring the pole up until it is just above the range during which you feel the stretch (Fig. J-3). Repeat for ten reps.

You only need to maintain your grip on the pole with your thumb and first fingers; it isn't necessary to make fists. Try narrowing your grip slightly between each rep to increase the intensity of the stretch.

### SynerStretch B

This exercise is not suitable for the isometric stretch technique.



J-1



J-2



J-3

## **Two-Person Chest/Front Shoulders Stretch**

*upper pectorals, anterior deltoid head*

Stand up straight with your elbows bent and your hands resting on top of one another, palms out, on your buttocks (Fig. K-1). Your partner should stand behind you in the position illustrated in Figure K-2.

### **SynerStretch A**

Have your partner slowly move your elbows back and toward one another in an arc. **Keep your shoulders down.** Hold for five seconds, then return to starting position. Repeat.

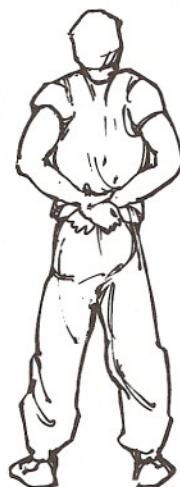
If you have good upper pectoral development, don't expect your elbows to touch the first time you do this exercise.

When this gets too easy, intensify the stretch by starting with your hands on your lower back instead of your buttocks.

### **SynerStretch B**

Have your partner slowly move your elbows back and together in an arc until you feel the stretch. The stretch should not be painful. Tense your shoulders and chest, pushing outward on your partner's hands. Your partner should match your push so *no motion occurs*. Maintain the isometric contraction for 10 seconds, then slowly relax.

Shake your arms out. Repeat the entire procedure two more times for a total of three reps.



K-1



K-2

## One-Person Standing Tricep Stretch *triceps*

Grab a pole in your right hand and lower it behind you as if you wanted to scratch your back. Your right arm should end up *against your ear*. Reach around behind with your left arm and grab the pole with your left hand, palm facing away from you (Fig. L-1).

### SynerStretch A

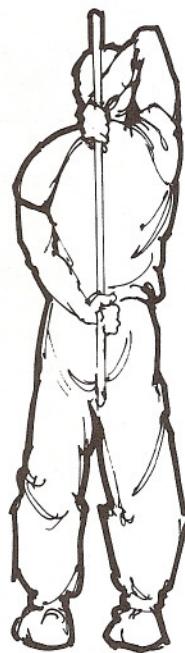
Pull down on the pole with your left hand. Push back gently with your head. Keep your right arm as relaxed as possible. You should feel the stretch in your right triceps. Hold your maximum stretch for about 10 seconds, then relax.

Repeat, holding the pole in your left hand.

### SynerStretch B

Pull down on the pole with your left hand. Keep your right arm as relaxed as possible. As soon as you feel the stretch in your right triceps, gently begin to pull up with your right hand. The pull should be intense, but not painful. *Keep pulling down hard enough with your left hand so no motion occurs.* Maintain pressure for 10 seconds, then relax. Straighten out your right arm for a second or two.

Repeat for a total of three reps with the pole in your right hand, followed by three reps with the pole in your left hand.



L-1

## Two-Person Kneeling Tricep Stretch *triceps*

Kneel and reach straight up with your right arm so your right elbow is in line with and slightly above your right ear. Your hand should be open, palm facing forward. Bend at the elbow and lower your forearm straight back while keeping your upper arm locked against your ear (Fig. M-1).

Your partner should grab your right hand in his or her left and stand as illustrated in Fig. M-2. Once in position, your right wrist should be bent all the way back, and your upper arm should still be locked against your ear.

### SynerStretch A

Have your partner gently push straight back on your upper arm while keeping your elbow bent as far as it will go (Fig. M-2). **He or she should also be pulling up against your arm.** Hold for about five seconds, then release slowly. Repeat for a total of two repetitions each arm.

Lean forward slightly throughout the stretch to prevent your back from arching.

### SynerStretch B

Have your partner gently push straight back on your upper arm while keeping your elbow bent as far as it will go (Fig. M-2). He/she should stop pushing and lock your arm in place when the stretch is noticeable but not painful.

Now, tense your triceps by trying to straighten out your arm; the push should be intense, but not painful. *Make sure your partner prevents any motion from occurring.* Maintain the isometric contraction for 10 seconds, then slowly relax. Gently straighten out your arm.

After a second or two, repeat the entire procedure with the same arm. Do a total of three reps with each arm.



M-1



M-2

# THE ROUTINES

## **SYNERSTRETCH A**

**SynerStretch A** is a quick maintenance routine for those already flexible. It was designed for bodybuilders, martial artists, and other athletes as an end-of-workout cool down. You can also use it if you're not particularly loose, don't want to put in the effort to get particularly loose, but don't want to get tighter as a result of bodybuilding, power lifting, wrestling, or whatever your athletic pursuit may be. "Maintenance" is the key word here.

If you are new to flexibility work, you should expect some mild discomfort in the muscle group being stretched *during the exercises*. This is natural. There is a definite difference, however, between the sharp, persistent pain of injury, and the dull burning of a muscle being urged to greater lengths. The first is a setback; the second, a necessity.

As you do the program described on the following pages, consciously try to relax the muscles you're stretching. It helps to think of them as limp rubber bands or elastic thread. Try to "feel" the muscle lengthening—use your breathing as an aid. Each time you exhale, the muscle should seem to get longer and looser.

Stretching can be a form of meditation. The rhythmic breathing, the unkinking of tension-knotted muscle, and the steady concentration involved act together to pacify the mind. Enjoy the exercise for its own sake; flexibility will follow.

<u>Exercise</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Exercise</u>	<u>Duration</u>
One-Person Seated Groin Stretch		One-Person Side/ Rear Shoulder Stretch (left) .....	10 seconds
Step 1 .....	20 seconds	(right) .....	10 seconds
Step 2 .....	20 seconds	One- or Two-Person	
Step 3 .....	20 seconds	Bicep/Front Shoulder Stretch .....	10 seconds
One-Person Lying Buttock/ Lower Back Stretch .....	20 seconds	One-Person Standing or Two-Person Kneeling	
One-Person Seated Calf/ Hamstring Stretch (Right Leg)		Triceps Stretch (left) .....	10 seconds
Step 1 .....	20 seconds	(right) .....	10 seconds
Step 2 .....	20 seconds	One- or Two-Person Chest/ Front Shoulder Stretch .....	10 seconds
Step 3 .....	20 seconds		
Step 4 .....	20 seconds		
One-Person Seated Calf/ Hamstring Stretch (Left Leg)			
Step 1 .....	20 seconds		
Step 2 .....	20 seconds		
Step 3 .....	20 seconds		
Step 4 .....	20 seconds		
One-Person Lying Groin Stretch ...	20 seconds		

## SYNERSTRETCH B

**SynerStretch B** is intended to help you develop flexibility. Anyone can use it. Dancers and martial artists should find it particularly useful for cutting down on lengthy stretch workouts!

All but one of the exercises in **SynerStretch B** use the Isometric Stretch Technique. For the large leg muscles, each stretch should be composed of three reps at 30 seconds each. For the smaller upper body muscles, two reps at 10 seconds each is sufficient.

<i><b>Lower Body</b></i>		<i><b>Upper Body</b></i>	
<i><u>Exercise</u></i>	<i><u>Duration</u></i>	<i><u>Exercise</u></i>	<i><u>Duration</u></i>
One-Person Seated Groin Stretch .....	3 sets @ 30 secs	One-Person Side/ Rear Shoulder Stretch (left) ..	2 sets @ 10 secs
One-Person Lying Buttocks/ Lower Back Stretch .....	3 sets @ 30 secs	(right) .....	2 sets @ 10 secs
Either: One-Person Seated Calf/ Hamstring Stretch (Right Leg)		One- or Two-Person Bicep/Front Shoulder Stretch (passive stretch) .....	10 seconds
Step 1 .....	3 sets @ 30 secs	One-Person Standing or Two-Person Kneeling Triceps Stretch	
Step 2 .....	3 sets @ 30 secs	(left) .....	2 sets @ 10 secs
<i>or</i>		(right) .....	2 sets @ 10 secs
Two-Person Lying Hamstring Stretch .....	3 sets @ 30 secs	Two-Person Chest/ Front Shoulder Stretch .....	2 sets @ 10 secs
Either: One-Person Seated Calf/ Hamstring Stretch (Left Leg)			
Step 1 .....	3 sets @ 30 secs		
Step 2 .....	3 sets @ 30 secs		
<i>or</i>			
Two-Person Lying Hamstring Stretch .....	3 sets @ 30 secs		
Two-Person Seated Groin Stretch .....	3 sets @ 30 secs		

## HOW MUCH, HOW OFTEN

Because **SynerStretch A** and **SynerStretch B** are based on different techniques and have different purposes, each has its own guidelines for "how much, how often."

If you just need to maintain flexibility, and thus have chosen to use **SynerStretch A**, you *can* do the routine several times per day since it doesn't involve any sort of muscular overload. You *should* do it at the end of each workout (weights, martial arts, etc.). If you are really short on time, you could split the routine and save the upper body portion for workout days devoted to upper body (punching workouts for martial artists, chest/back/arm days for bodybuilders, etc.). The lower body portion should still be done three or four times a week.

If you need to develop flexibility and thus have chosen to use **SynerStretch B**, do that routine **at most once per day!** **SynerStretch B** involves near-maximal isometric contractions, and doing it more than once within a 24- to 36-hour period increases your risk of muscle pulls. Your best bet: if you are working to increase flexibility, use both **SynerStretch A** and **SynerStretch B**, performed on alternate days. That will insure the greatest progress in the least time.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
SynerStretch	SynerStretch	SynerStretch	SynerStretch	SynerStretch	SynerStretch	Rest
A	B	A	B	A	B	

Your upper body will probably stretch out faster than your lower body. In fact, you should achieve upper body flexibility sufficient to enhance performance of almost any sport within a month or two. A good guideline for "enough" is being able to touch your elbows together during the Two-Person Chest/Front Shoulder Stretch. Switch to the **SynerStretch A** *upper body* routine as soon as you accomplish that.

Stay with the **SynerStretch B** *lower body* routine until you are limber enough to meet the demands of your sport. If you are not training for anything in particular, aim for putting your palms flat on the ground when trying to touch your toes. That's a reasonable objective. Whatever your goal, when you accomplish it, switch over to the **SynerStretch A** lower body routine as well.\*

\*We recommend the switch because there is a trade-off between flexibility and stability. The looser you get, the less support offered to the joints by their adjacent muscles. Excessive flexibility can be just as much of a liability as not enough flexibility. Either one increases your risk of injury.

*Of all types of exercise, stretching has the most to offer to the greatest number of people. Some athletes simply can't excel without it—martial artists and dancers, for instance. Others, like bodybuilders, must do flexibility work to keep from tightening up as a result of the intense, repetitive muscle contraction involved in their pursuits.*

*But the effects of stretching transcend the requirements of specific sports. The benefits mentioned earlier in this course—improved circulation, freedom from the aches and pains that grow common with age, decreased chance of muscle pulls and strains, more graceful movement, and enhanced physical performance—are there for anyone willing to devote just a few minutes a day to flexibility work.*

*Good luck with SynerStretch!*

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