

Warm Up and Cool Down

Why warm up?

Warming up helps to prevent injury by increasing circulation and blood supply to the muscles before they are expected to engage and perform high intensity activities.

How do we warm up?

Warm up's should include something to gently increase the heart rate. 15 minutes of continuous movement will do the trick, followed by some active stretches.

Some examples of how to increase the heart rate include:

- Jogging
- Skipping
- Vinyasa yoga
- Gentle circuits of body weight exercises

Please refer to the specific stretching guides available to choose the right stretches for your activity.

Remember to choose a warm up activity that is relevant to the activity that you are about to complete. For example an adagio dance work would suit a vinyasa yoga warm up more so than skipping. It is usually more important for musicians to be stretching their upper limbs than their ankles (unless there is a specific injury of course).

How to stay warm?

What happens when you are in rehearsals where you have to be standing or sitting around for long periods of time?

When possible, wear appropriate clothes to stay warm, use heat packs, heat creams or heat patches for artificial heat and try not to completely stop moving. Some active stretches such as yoga poses can help your muscles to stay warm.

Why cool down?

When you are exercising your muscles, either repetitive or high impact movements, the muscles are contracting (shortening) to move your joints. This process creates a waste product called lactic acid. Lactic acid can be quite uncomfortable and in some cases painful. By cooling down appropriately we are trying to allow the heart rate and breathing to slow down gently, and help to prevent as much waste product. Gentle cool down exercises create muscle compression which 'pushes out' the lactic acid and reduces post exertion soreness. By stretching during your cool down you are helping yourself to prevent muscles from staying in contraction and therefore reducing range of motion of a joint.

How to cool down?

You can cool down first by reducing the intensity of the activity to allow the heart rate to gently return to a resting pace.

Stretching the muscles that have just been under load will help to keep the length in the muscle, prevent muscular tightness and reduce lactic acid/post exercise soreness. The best time to get good flexibility results by stretching is after your exercise as the increased in circulation can help.