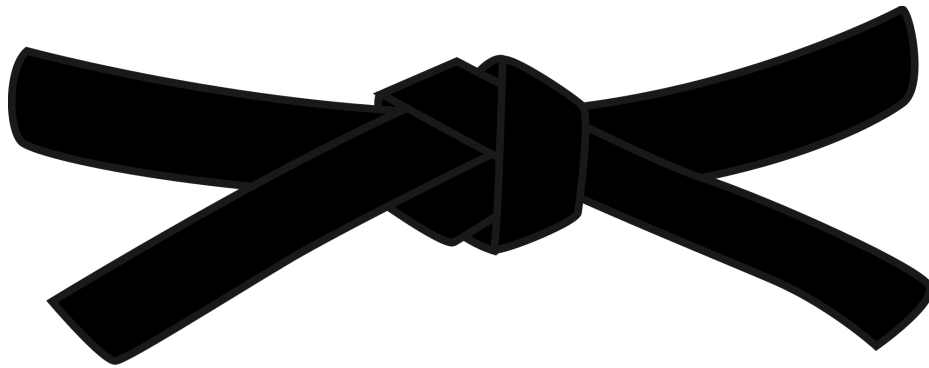


# Kick Specific Stretching; A Guide.

Presented as a Thesis  
Grading to 3rd Dan



## **DISCLAIMER**

Please know that while a great deal of research and personal experience went into the creation of this guide, I am by no means a medical professional.

**Please take into account any personal medical advice given to you, especially regarding injuries.**

Every body is different, and reacts differently to stretches depending on a number of factors including (but not limited to) age, genetics, gender, injury, or lifestyle. We cannot expect to be flexible in the same way or to the same degree as those around us, and should set our goal as improvement and maintenance instead of perfection to ensure safe but effective stretching.

With that in mind, this guide has been created so that goals can be set entirely by the individual and is broken down by techniques, with some general stretching and yoga flow included. Essentially, if you find one technique and your body just isn't pairing well- which we hate to admit but is absolutely normal and does happen- you can set your sights on improving another instead, with specific stretches suggested for doing so. Taekwon-Do practitioners should always aim for improvement but we also must acknowledge our limitations to practice and train safely.

## **Using this Guide**

While my personal interest in stretching actually began in physiotherapy sessions for back and shoulder injuries, it grew into primarily doing yin and vinyasa yoga styles. As a result, you'll notice a great deal of this guide takes information from yoga, with the poses and stretches named accordingly. The stretch names are provided so that they can be researched further, or found within this guide more easily when required\*.

As a result of the yoga inspiration, the stretches provided are almost entirely static, instead of dynamic. In Taekwon-Do classes it is common to see a mix of both, with an emphasis on dynamic stretching, but this guide was created out of personal interest and experience so it is focused on static.

As you will see, there are four primary kicks used for 'kick specific stretching' in this guide. In Taekwon-Do, we have multitudes of kicks as a result of height, angle, stance, and any number of other variations. These four kicks were chosen based on the timeline of learning often featuring these at the beginning of a Taekwon-Do journey, as well as their differing usage of body parts to ensure this guide was well-rounded. The stretches provided are not limited to the kicks they are recorded under, for example the front snap kick section will provide significant help in twisting kick performance as well. But they are listed under certain kicks to give a clearer indication of body areas they will best apply to. Additionally, are a few stretches listed under 'good for them all' which can apply to any of the kicks and are also recommended for regular use.

In an ideal world, stretches should be held for 1- 2 deep breaths or up to 60 seconds if time allows or for more meditative practice, and stretching sessions should be daily. But a minimum

of three 30-60 minute sessions a week will create a difference and improvement can begin to be seen slowly.

\*Initially this guide was intended to be no more than 4 pages long.

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# Kick specific stretching

## Front Snap Kick- Apcha Busigi

The focus of front snap kick stretches provided is on front facing stretching for hamstrings, quads, knees, and feet. You will notice some stretches will not provide more intense variations as the goal here is to stretch what is primarily needed for this specified kick, and you will find other variations in other sections.

### Toes and Feet

The Front Snap Kick, or in Korean; Apcha Busigi, is typically the kick taught and learned first. Similar to Chon-Ji, it's the beginning, the creation of your taekwon-do journey in kicks. As a result, the kick is often mistaken as being simplistic, and low impact when compared to others found in the encyclopedia. However as most dan belts will tell you, there's more at play than there appears.

A front snap kick involves the usage of all the joints of the leg, as well as the toes and the majority of the muscles found in the leg. Primarily, this kick is felt in the quadriceps, hamstrings, the knees, the ball of the foot on impact, and for those new to training often the top of the foot finds strain in pulling back the toes. Therefore, these are the recommended areas of focus to stretch.

Breaking down the front snap kick to its pieces begins with the toes and feet.



Starting standing, come up onto the toes of each foot one at a time. You're not aiming to put weight on this foot, but aiming to push forward the shin over the toes while the ball of the foot remains planted on the ground.

This is getting the joints in the toes, and ankles moving.

Staying standing, flip the toes the other way, and roll them under the foot. I would

recommend leaning into this stretch slowly- many including myself find otherwise a shooting pain will go up your shin. Not uncommon, but not pleasant. Again, the goal isn't to put weight on this foot and ankle, it's just to push the shin forward to feel a stretch in the top of the foot, ankle, and shin.



A seated option- sit with both legs out in front, keeping the spine tall and not leaning back on the hands to weaken the stretch - slowly swapping between feet pointed forward with toes rolled under, and feet pulled back towards the body with toes tugged back as far as they'll go towards us. This stretch uses more strength than the standing stretches and is a good way to start training the muscles to work on demand.

## Hamstrings

*Please note further hamstring stretches are provided in other kick sections of this guide and can also be of use here. This was done to emphasize the primary used body parts in each kick. This is just the surface of what's available!*

Hamstrings may seem less important for a kick primarily moving forward using knees and quadricep muscles, but stretching hamstrings here is how you make sure the 'snap' part of the kick isn't going to cause injury. When you throw your foot out with the snapping motion of this kick it pulls everything in the hamstrings tight as the dynamic movement reaches full extension, opening the opportunity for harm or strain.

### Seated Variations

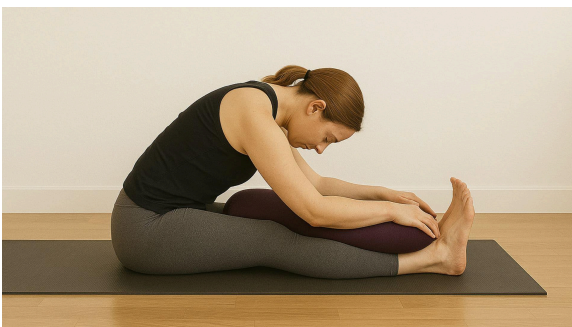
In winter please be aware it may be best to sit on something on the floor to avoid the cold of the floor affecting the ability to warm up.

With legs out in front, straight if possible but not knees locked, toes pulled back (if you have a sciatic nerve issue please consult your physio for whether this is going to be the best option for you) The aim is to fold forwards over the legs- folding from the waist rather than curving the spine and shoulders. The photo shown is the ideal goal, however it's more realistic to expect a certain amount of shoulder curving for those of us with tight hamstrings.



Additionally, here are two options for making this stretch more accessible or more difficult if you find you aren't at the stage of stomach pressing on legs and folded like a nice lawnchair yet.

What's shown here is a way to make this stretch more accessible for when it's cold, or it's a sore day, or you're just at a different stage with your stretching goals. You can use our belt for this, a piece of fabric, a rope (although I've found this uncomfortable for the feet) or an actual yoga band if present. Simply bring the band around both feet, and hold one side in each hand and gradually pull the torso down towards the legs. This allows for the focus to be put back on the stretch instead of struggling to stay upright, as well as more control over the limits hit.



This is for when you're a bit further along in your flexibility goals but still not at the lawnchair stage yet. As shown here, a yoga bolster is used but this can be swapped for a cushion, a block, or even a pad if that's what's on hand. It allows for increased fold with less support but enough to hold the body at its current limit.

An additional option is lying all the way back as shown, and using a band to pull one leg up at a time- the focus here is not to see how high the leg can be pulled but instead to straighten the knee at the highest point manageable before increasing height. To make this more of a strength exercise, the band can be removed and hands braced behind the thigh to support; focusing on using leg muscles to pull and straighten.



If you find you are in need of an increased stretch, shown on the left are two variations of what's called 'heron pose' in yoga. A seated, and a lying version. Be aware the seated upright version can put pressure on the hip due to the folded leg. In both variations, it remains important to remember the goal is a straightened leg at height, not just leg at highest point.

The lying down variation is done with one foot planted close to your seat, and the length of the spine remaining in contact with the floor- if you find your middle back lifting to do this, it may be better to take the upright variation to build the posture in the back first- ensure the knee is not falling to the side in either direction, and then the non-planted foot comes up with the leg. Foot held, calf held, or back of knee held as long as the leg is pulling straight.



The seated variation is done upright, with one leg folded in front, aiming to have shin horizontal and parallel to the torso, before the other leg is lifted ( what's shown here is toes pointed- aim for toes pulled back) being careful with the knee to not over-lock.

An option that is light in intensity and does not involve getting on the floor, is to sit in a chair, plant one foot flat on the ground, extending the other leg out with toes back as shown, then folding from the waist over the leg- keeping hands on chair or behind the back to ensure focus on bending at the waist. This can also be done sitting on the edge of a couch, the extended leg ahead of you on the couch and the planted foot on the ground - personally I found this variation very helpful in recovery.



## Standing Variations



This is a basic yoga pose called 'Forward fold'. It's effectively the standing version of what was previously shown, and increases the stretch due to standing. Shown on the left is the ideal goal- which realistically is uncommon (I can't do this!) But does show the same important points- folding at the waist, stomach pressed to legs before shoulder curving.

This is the accessible, supported version, using a prop. The prop can also be removed and the hands can just press onto the shins but this is the lightest version, and allows for the prop to be swapped for different items to get the ideal height. The goal here is to flatten the back as shown, keeping legs straight and beginning to train the folding from the waist movement without using as much core strength to stay there. Removing some struggle to stretch more effectively.

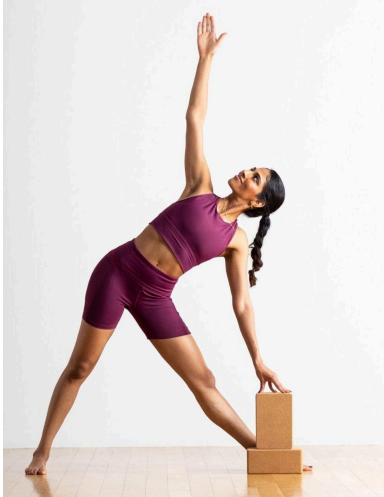
Again, to increase this, the prop is removed, and the hands press onto the shins, then ankles, then ground, as the bend front the waist with straight back increases- eventually aiming for the top image.



To the left is a standing lunge, probably already known to you from high school PE days! It remains effective. Similar to a walking stance, ensure the feet are shoulder width apart, generous bend in the front knee, back leg is straight with heel pulled off the ground to ensure the hips stay even and pointed forwards. This image shows hands raised to add muscle use in the arms, but it will not cost you the stretch to put your hands on your hips if preferred. The focus needs to be keeping the leg straight, hips forward, and then begin to push the heel down to the floor to feel it in the hamstrings further.

This in yoga is referred to as 'triangle pose'. Shown are two variations. Triangle pose is made with both legs straight, legs two shoulder widths or a comfortable distance apart, one foot is pointed to the side, the other to the front. This is crucial- without the feet position shown, the stretch is lost.

On the left, a supported and more accessible version- blocks used to control the gravity in stretching over to the side over the pointed foot.



On the right, the unsupported version and goal, hand reaches all the way down to the foot. The opposite arm in both versions is pointed straight up but in line with the arm pointed down. If this is too much on the shoulders or arms, wrap this arm behind your lower back instead, keeping the upper torso peeled back instead of rolling over the leg.



Also shown here is a variation of this stretch which folds directly forwards over the front leg- this can increase intensity on the hamstrings and remove the chest opening with the arms to lower difficulty further.



## Knees & Quadriceps

*As mentioned in the disclaimer- please take into account any medical advice given to you. This will be especially important to those with knee injuries for this particular section. The knee is a delicate and vulnerable joint. Stretch with care.*

The knees and quads (quadriceps) are primarily where you'll be getting your strength and actual motion for this kick from. The quads carry the bulk of the weight to get the leg up and out, and the knees are the main joint being flexed for our snapping motion. Fortunately, being next to each other anatomically, most stretches aimed at one will activate the other!



If the knee is okay with bearing weight while stretching, the standing lunge from the hamstring section is of value here to get the knee moving, but personally I see a lot of value in stretching knees and joints without making them bare weight to keep them protected so that is what's provided below; These are two standing options- the left involves bringing the knee up towards the chest, foot held up



flat instead of allowing it to point down to the floor, the goal is simply to bring the knee closer to the chest without bending the shoulders or spine down to meet it.

The right is effectively the opposite, this image uses a table for balance. In this stretch the foot is brought behind and pulled towards the lower back. Please note to keep the knee pointed down towards the floor, if the knee follows behind the stretch is more focused on the quads.

A seated, weightless knee stretch option is a variation on a yoga pose called figure 4. This variation shown is seated upright but other variations are shown later in this guide that increase the focus on different areas. To set this up; Sitting up, plant one foot close to your seat, not all the way in, but close. The heel of the other foot comes up, over, and rests just beneath the knee of the planted leg- horizontal. It's important in all variations to ensure the feet and toes are active and being pulled back.



## Turning Kick - Dollyio Chagi

Turning kick is one of the kicks Taekwon-Do is most famous for. There's a great deal of power to be found in this kick, with the weight of the quads, glutes, and hips behind it. As a result, it's intense on the body and often leads to soreness when first attempted (or even later down the line!). This kick uses a great deal of similar parts to the front snap kick, so to be frank, it would be heavily suggested to use all of the previously shown stretches in the front snap kick section for this kick as well as what is provided below. Specifically- there is not an additional hamstring stretch section in this kick as the ones provided in front snap kick and some from the later reverse turning kick section apply best here.

### Toes, Feet, and Ankles

As mentioned, please find the variations for toes and feet stretches in the front-snap kick section of this guide and use them here. However, below is an additional option for the ankles due to the nature of turning kicks foot position being turned over instead of straight as seen in front snap kick.



'Alphabetical Exercise' is actually more of a dynamic stretch for the ankles than a static.

To do this exercise, sit as shown in the image on the left. Keep the spine tall, not leaning back on the hands if possible, pull the toes back at the end of straight legs. Now using the toes, feet, and ankles, draw the letters that spell out the word 'Taekwon-Do' or another long word with varied letters. Keep the toes pulled back through this process, and avoid lifting the foot off the ground to keep the focus on moving the foot and ankle. This can also be done with a prop as shown



on the right, standing with the knee lifted for added difficulty or lying back with the foot lifted to the ceiling.

### Knees, Quads, Glutes and Hips

These areas are often overlapped in stretching, and some difficulty can be found in isolating each one completely. For turning kick purposes, this in some ways is ideal; this kick uses all of these parts at once -unavoidably- so stretching them together is somewhat necessary. As such, the below stretches will apply to more than one of these areas, or even all at once. As mentioned previously, please take care with the knees, but also with the hips. More accessible as well as more difficult options are provided to ensure personalisation.

Shown on the right is 'butterfly pose'. This one primarily is felt in the glutes, though it may also be felt in the knees and hip flexors as well, it can be done static or dynamic, both are recommended.

To set this up, bring the feet in, and press together before pulling both feet towards yourself. The ideal goal is what's shown- feet pulled all



the way in and knees flat. But to reach this it is still a good stretch to find the feet further out so the knees can fall down more comfortably.



To the left is called a half\* variation on yoga pose 'lord of the fish'. One leg is folded similarly to butterfly pose, but the foot is pulled over to be next to the seat instead of in front of the middle. The other leg comes up and over, planting the foot on the outside of the folded leg. The variation of the elbow being used to further twist and pull the knee over as shown on the left is optional if difficulty is found in the legs without it. I would still recommend using the hand to hold the knee up or pull over- to prevent it lowering and losing the stretch.

\*I have not included 'full lord of the fish' as it is intense on the lower back and I would be hesitant to

do it without a professional's advice on how to do so safely.

If the stretch of 'half lord of the fish' is not enough, or the goals have reached past this point (though I would suggest keeping that one in rotation!) The next option which stretches both glutes at once is referred to as 'cow face' pose. The arms shown on the right are optional- though to set these up please see the upper body section found later in this guide. The legs are set up similarly to 'half lord of the fish'; one leg folds and the foot is brought right around and tucks next to the seat. The other leg comes up and over, the foot being brought around to the other side of the seat- ideally aligned with the bottom leg's foot- and the knee begins to drop down until stacked on top of the bottom leg's knee. To clarify- if the left leg is on the bottom, the left foot comes around to the right side, the right knee stacks on top of the left knee, and the right foot comes around to the left side.



**1**

Shown above are 3 variations of what's called 'fire logs' pose. To set up this up as shown in '2', One leg rests knee bent, flat on the ground with the shin horizontal to the torso. The second leg comes up, the foot placed on the knee of the first leg, and then falls down to stack the shins horizontally and on top of each other. Shown in '1' is a supported, more accessible version if the glutes aren't prepared for the knee to sit flat yet. Shown in '3' is the variation to take once '2' is



**2**



**3**

accessible and readily achieved- the legs remain the same and the body folds at the waist over the legs, arms extended.



Shown on the left is 'lotus' pose. The highest level of stretch of the fire-log type pose variations (though this may be debated by others!) This is intense on the knees, the glutes, the hip flexors, and if you're like me you'll actually feel it in your feet as well. To set this up, start with both legs out in front and separated. Bring the first foot up to rest on the opposite leg's thigh, folding the knee and resting the leg down. The second leg repeats- the foot is brought to the opposite leg's thigh, over the top of the first leg, then the knee folds and rests down. You may find the spine has an urge to curve in this pose, it is important if this is where your goals are, to keep the spine tall. Hands can plant on the floor if necessary. As in 'fire logs', to increase this further, fold from the waist over the legs, arms extended.



1.



2.



3.

Shown above are three variations - with increasing difficulty- of 'pigeon' pose.

'1' shows the classic and most known variation. This pose is primarily felt in the hip flexors of the folded leg, and the front quad of the extended leg (with variance found in hip and glute areas for most). Start with both legs behind, lying on the stomach. The first leg is brought knee first up to the front of the body, and the foot extends up to make the shin horizontal and parallel to the torso. It is important to note- the back foot should remain straight pointing back, and not be allowed to fall to either side. The foot of the folded leg is pulled back, toes also. '2' shows the next stage- folding from the waist over the front leg. And '3' shows another increased stretch variation, but the stretch is increased specifically in the quad of what was the extended leg. This variation includes lifting the foot by hand, and gradually pulling up to the back of the torso. In variation '3', it is important to release the foot gently when moving to a new stretch or cramping can be found in the quad, and to keep the spine tall with the chest facing forwards instead of allowing it to pull around with the hand.

## Side Piercing Kick- Yeop-Chagi

Unlike the front snap kick and turning kicks, side piercing is of course, not a snapping kick. Instead, it's a thrusting kick, and is performed as named- to the side. The nature of this kick involves the entirety of the leg being held and pushed out in a piston-like motion, requiring everything from feet muscles, knees, calves, glutes, quads, and everything in between. Additionally, this kick can impact the back and ribs, many finding strain in areas of the trunk in order to get the leg up to height. A powerful technique! But there's a lot of work to be done stretching-wise.

### Feet and Ankles

The nature of side piercing kick is not to kick with the balls of the foot, and instead turn the ankle and flatten the foot to kick with the 'foot sword'. Finding this foot position can feel strained, it's not a typical way for a person to hold their foot. For the ankles, please see the alphabet exercise found in the turning kick section of this guide, it is beneficial for this kick also. To add a variation for this kick specifically, seat with the legs out in front but separated to a comfortable distance (no more than a shoulder width needed), and as well as the alphabetical spelling, also practice rolling the foot into position pointing inwards. It's a great way to start building the motion needed without adding balance into the mix yet.

As shown on the right- a deep side lunge can also be useful for training the foot into a side piercing kick position, as well as strengthening the legs to prepare for what will be needed to perform a side piercing kick. Ensure the feet are kept flat to the ground as shown for this to be of value for side piercing kick specifically. This is also good for the hamstrings!



### Hamstrings

In a side piercing kick, the hamstrings will feel different and react differently to how they may feel during other kicks. Additionally, as this is a thrusting kick and not a snapping kick, they can spend more time extended and pulled tight than they would in other techniques. As this kick is motioned to the side, it is not necessarily expected for the hamstrings to find an issue- but it is almost certain they will! I would recommend taking the front on hamstring variations found in front snap kick as well as the options provided below that will help to stretch the hip flexors as well.



As previously shown, an excellent hamstring stretch is a forward fold. As well as having the legs together, this position can be found with the feet and legs apart, as shown on the left. The goal is what is shown, but if your goals are not this yet, it is still fine to take previously described supported versions with blocks or pads under the hands to make this more accessible. Ensure the feet point straight ahead, and are parallel, with straight legs. Again, as in all

forward fold variations it is important to fold from the waist and avoid curving the spine and shoulders.



As with other forward fold variations, the wide legged can also be found in a seated position. What's shown here is with feet and toes pulled back to activate the hamstrings further, however I would also suggest forming the side piercing kick foot sword position with the feet and folding from the waist.

If you have access to a foam roller or back roller, this can be put under the arms and used to gently roll forwards and backwards if the static version is not the stage you are looking at yet.



On the right is a seated side and hamstring stretch- Also a good option if the goal is to move on towards flying side piercing kick as it forms a similar leg tuck position. For this one in particular, set up the legs wide initially, then bring one foot to press flat against the inner thigh of the opposite leg. What's shown here is the ideal goal, with the arm on

the side of the extended leg inside the legs, and the other arm overhead and touching the toes.



The more accessible versions of this can include usage of a belt or band around the foot of the extended leg and held by the arm over head, or the arm sitting down inside the leg can be bent at 90 degrees with the hand perpendicular to the shin and knee. Important things to note are to attempt to keep the shoulders stacked over each other, and over the thigh instead of outside of the legs.

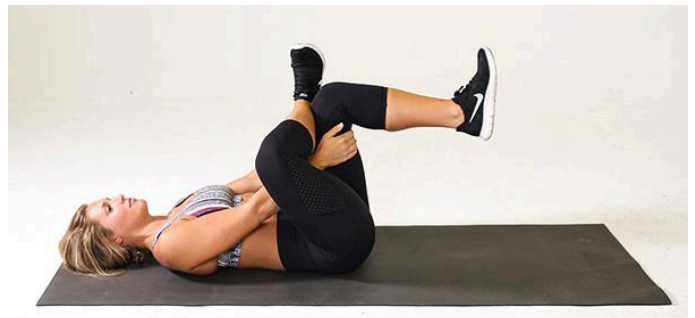
## Quads, Glutes, Hips, and Hip Flexors

As previously discussed, some areas of the body find a great deal of overlap in stretching and yoga poses. For side piercing kick, the hips and hip flexors can be a bit of a problem area due to them carrying the weight of lifting the leg and squashing the knee in to then shoot out in the familiar piston motion. Likewise, the glutes and quads are used as the background of the power in this technique, and can cramp if left unstretched. It is heavily suggested you take all of the hip, glute, and quad options found in the turning kick section, as well as what is provided below.



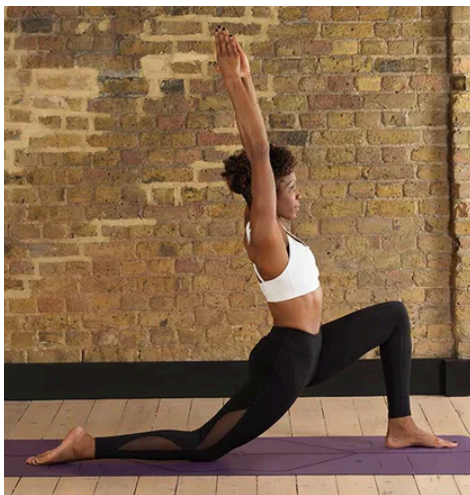
Shown on the left is appropriately named 'happy baby pose'. This stretch primarily is felt in the hips and glutes, though can also provide stretch in the shoulders. This is set up by lying down on your back, lifting the legs at the knees, and reaching up with the arms to grab the outside of the feet. Please note- the outside of the feet is specified intentionally, as grabbing the inside lessens the stretch. The goal is to keep the back flat to the ground, as well as the head, and not begin any spine curve towards the feet. To make this a dynamic stretch, once in position you can rock side to side to roll the back and gently put more pressure on each hip at a time.

On the right is a variation of the previously mentioned 'figure four' pose, this is the reclined variation. This variation increases the stretch on the hips and glutes, whereas the previously shown seated upright variation increases the quads and knees. To set this up, lie all the way back, plant one foot close to the seat with knee up. Bring the opposite foot up and over to rest just below the knee on the planted leg, then bring the hands around the thigh of the planted leg and lift; pulling towards the body. Ensure the stacked leg is kept horizontal, ideally not allowing the knee to fall in towards the torso though if this isn't quite accessible yet the stretch can still be found.





Shown on the left and right are 'frog pose', at its ideal position. Realistically, most people are not able to lie flat as shown- so do not be discouraged here. This is targeting the inside of thighs, groin, and hip flexors. Start on hands and knees, lower to elbows and knees, and begin to splay the knees open, allowing gravity to bring the pelvis as close to the floor as possible. As the knees splay, turn the feet to point outwards also. Personally I find this easier done after the knees are pushed out rather than prior.



Shown here are variations of a 'low crescent lunge'. Similar to the previously mentioned standing lunge, but with more emphasis on the quads, instead of the hamstrings. The left image is the base form of this pose. The best way to set this up is to begin from standing lunge, then lower the extended legs knee to the floor. In this variation, the foot pushes further back to target the quad of the extended leg and the groin area. The upper right image is the variation to take to further target the quad; the opposite arm comes across the body to grab the



lifted foot of the extended leg and pull it towards the glute (shown again is the ideal result, but having one hand planted as in the lower right image on the floor or the foot not pulled all the way in still allows this area to be targeted). The lower right variation is sometimes referred to as 'twisted monkey' and can also allow for the knee in front to fall outwards to increase the stretch in the hips and groin.



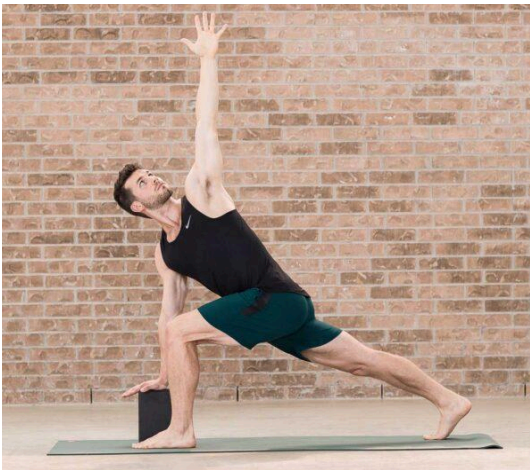
For an increased difficulty option for the quads and hips, Shown on the left is 'reclined hero pose'. This is intense on the quads but also the knees- for those with knee injuries I would not suggest this stretch without advice from your physio. To set this up, start sitting back on the feet, knees out in front. Tug the feet out from underneath the seat to be to the outside of the hips. Keeping the shins and knees on the ground, recline back with arms folded overhead.

## Reverse Turning Kick - Bandae Dollyio Chagi

A reverse turning kick uses much of the same moving parts as a side piercing kick, with different motion. The leg neither snaps, nor thrusts, and instead it follows more of a sweeping motion. Reverse turning kick can be done off the front leg but is more commonly known for coming off the back leg and involving a spin to get the foot to the target. In either version, the lower back and torso experience significantly more use than it does in other kicks due to the twist factor of spinning or lifting the leg across the body to bring it back. For this kick, I would recommend taking every stretch provided in the side piercing kick and turning kick sections, as well as what is provided below. *This kick is an increase in difficulty to the previous, as such the stretching difficulty will increase as well in order to be best effective. As continually mentioned, stretch with care- those with lower back and hip injuries please take extra care here.*

### Hamstrings With Twists

As mentioned, this kick comes with the added difficulty factor of the spin and generally results in twisting the torso. Some of this spin will inevitably need to come from core strength, but for the kick to happen successfully, the hamstrings need to not only be warmed as in other kicks, but also be warmed with the twist factor to ensure they are prepared for the added pull this can cause. Below are further hamstring stretches but with variations made to include the twist factor of this kick- better preparing the body as a whole.



This on the left is a variation on 'low lunge'. As mentioned, low lunge comes in many, many forms. This variation adds a twist with the knee raised to better replicate the shapes created in a reverse turning kick. Much like in standing high lunge, the front knee is generously bent, the back and extended leg is straight. In this image is a supported version- in true low lunge the hand rests on the ground instead of a block or support, but for a lowered difficulty emphasis on the twist I would recommend this variation. The hand opposite the leg is resting on the ground or support, the other lifts up and aims to the ceiling, vertical instead of pushing over the head. The aim here is to keep the torso turned to face the bent knee- the arms acting as a way of forcing this to happen.

This on the right is an increased difficulty version of the twisted low lunge. This is 'low crescent lunge with twist'. In this variation, the extended leg's knee comes to the ground- this actually decreases the hamstring stretch and puts more of an emphasis on the hips with the twist- but is a good way to increase the twist after the previous option. The toes can also be tucked under here for a foot stretch.



This is the next stage of increased difficulty due to it also being a strength and balance building option. The hamstrings of the standing leg will feel it most but it's not uncommon to feel it in both here. This is referred to as 'revolved half moon pose'. To set this up, start standing with feet together, begin to fold forward from the waist; when the torso is horizontal and perpendicular to the legs, raise one leg behind. It is important to note the goal is not to lift the raised leg as much as possible but to keep it level with the torso. The same hand as the raised foot should be planted on the ground, or on a support as shown in the image, the opposite arm is lifted and aimed to the ceiling, aligned vertically with the lowered arm.



On the right is another hamstring twist- this one coming as a variation of wide legged forward fold. Set this one up from setting up a wide legged forward fold as seen in the side piercing kick section, the with one hand planted in the center on the ground (or on a support), the other hand raises to the ceiling, twisting to peel the shoulder of the lifted arm back and stack them- as shown it eases the strain to look upwards at the raised hand rather than at the floor.



## Back and Shoulders

A big part of twisting for the spin in this kick comes from the back and shoulders being able to move quickly around, not just the legs! As a result, they can find strain if left un-stretched. As discussed, the goal of this section is to find twists and stretches that prepare the body for doing all its going to do at once in this kick. However it is also crucial to health to take extra special care with the back and shoulders, as such this kick has its own upper body section, much of which would be recommended to apply to other areas of Taekwon-Do also.



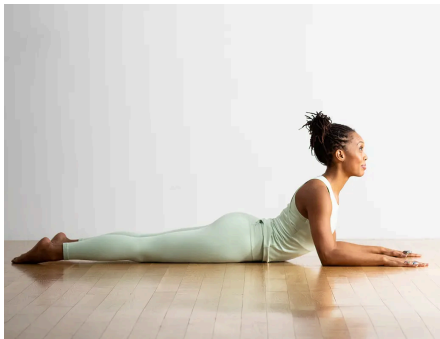
On the left is a personal favorite for stretching and warming up the back. This is called 'bird dog', and is set up by coming to hands and knees first, then the opposite hand to opposite foot lift to form ideally a horizontal length from finger tip to heel (note the toes and foot is pulled back here), the goal here is not to raise the hand and leg as high as possible, but to maintain the level line.



Shown in the top image is 'melting heart' pose. This image shows the ideal version, however to make this more accessible the seat can be lowered closer to the heels. This stretch is primarily felt in the shoulders but due to the slight back bend can also be felt along the length of the back. To set this up, start from hands and knees, bring the hands forwards as far as is manageable, and sink the shoulders down between the arms until the forehead can or does touch the ground.



To add a twist to this stretch that will increase the shoulder stretch, find what is shown in the lower image 'thread the needle' variation. When in melting heart, take one hand back towards the body, it then slides to the side, under the outstretched arm and through the gap between the chest and the floor- note the palm is facing up.



Above are three different yoga poses. Each stretches the same areas (lower back, and shoulders) with differing degrees of intensity, and are often mistaken for each other- to the point that googling one results in all three.

On the left- This is 'Sphinx' pose. The lightest variation, with the least amount of back bend and can be done with the toes tucked also. The elbows should be planted directly beneath the shoulders or slightly ahead of, the hands out in front and fingers splayed.

In the Middle- This is 'cobra' pose. Very similar to sphynx, however the hand placement is the changing factor. The hands come to either side of the ribs, and push back to create the back bend- but not all the way back here. The toes can be tucked here also.

On the Right- This is 'upward facing dog', the most intense of the back bends shown here. Do not tuck the toes in this pose. Instead the top of the feet are used to plant on the floor, the hands plant similarly to cobra, and push all the way up. Lifted also are the thighs and knees, muscles engaged to hold just above the floor as shown in the image.



On the left is a seated twist, which can also be used to stretch the hips and glutes. To set this up, sit on the ground with feet out in front, bring one foot in to plant close to the seat as shown. The opposite elbow to the planted foot comes up and over the knee, tucking in on the outside of that knee to pull the shoulders around. The other hand stays on the floor to maintain balance.

On the right is 'bridge' pose. This is best done in multiple rounds and not just held continuously- almost as a dynamic motion but still briefly paused in place. Start by lying flat on the back, bring both feet up to plant close to the seat, knees up, but together or at most a handspan apart. The hips then tilt and pull up towards the knees, making a line from knee to chest ideally keeping the back straight when raised as shown. Shown also is a support held between the knees to prevent splaying outwards or pressing the knees together excessively. The strength to lift should come from the core and back.



## Good For Them All

This section has a few named stretches that are not listed under specific kicks due to them being good stretches for all round and routine stretching and could be applied to all of the kicks. A lot of these stretches are used in my own personal regular practice, and I would recommend using them similarly.



Shown on the left is the classic 'downward facing dog' pose that is often what is pictured when yoga is mentioned. It is incredibly beneficial for the hamstrings, shoulders, upper back, and ankles. What's shown is the ideal result with heels flat on the floor but it is reasonable to expect heels lifted slightly for most. This pose is best set up starting in a plank position, ensuring the hands are planted below the shoulders, then pushing back to lift the seat and push through the shoulders. Splay the fingers to ensure the pressure is on the hands and not the wrists here, and ideally keep the knees straightened though bent at first is also useful.



To add a twist to this stretch and increase its variability, shown in the lower image is 'three legged dog'. First set up for downward dog, then raise one leg as high as manageable, before bending the knee and twisting to let it come over the back- as though trying to flip over one limb at a time.

Shown on the right is a stretch that looks like a primary lower back stretch but is secretly also a shoulder, glute, and hip stretch. This is set up by lying on the back, arms out in a T, the feet plant close to the seat, then the knees flop together over to one side, bottoms of feet turning over also as shown. This, like bridge, is good to do in rounds, pausing on either side.





You may have noticed that throughout this guide, there is not a great deal of side-specific stretches. That is quite frankly because the majority of the already mentioned yoga poses will stretch the sides as well as the target areas. However on the left is a side specific option that is also good for all kicks, and can be done with several leg variations; taking anything from the firelogs leg pose, to the butterfly pose, to the lord of the fish. Anywhere the legs are found, one hand plants on the floor and then slides outwards away from the body, keeping both sides of the seat on the floor, raising the

opposite hand overhead and stretching over to the side of the extended hand.

## Further Recommendations

For those looking to further their stretching beyond this guide, or prefer other formats for learning, I would recommend using the youtube account "Yoga With Adrienne", and the spotify podcast "Flow With Me Yoga" (specifically episodes 43, 45, and 31). Both provide options for more meditative yoga practice, as well as just good general stretching or workout variations. Additionally, found online are several other Taekwon-Do stretching guides- I would recommend them all!