

Training Leg Swings: Incorporating Leg Swings into Your Workouts

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There are many areas in gymnastics to incorporate leg swings, which I like to call leg drives because they should be very dynamic leg kicks, not lifts. Most of the skills done in gymnastics are not slow and holding but fast and dynamic so the leg kicks should simulate the action of the legs during the skills. This also will eliminate some of the unnecessary injuries the athletes incur and make the skills easier to achieve.

In this article we'll discuss the many different types of leg swings, where to put them in a workout, and which skills the leg swings relate to.

Every gym is different, from the layout to the number of hours of training to the level of athletes and the amount of time and space available during the workout. Use this information to fit your gym and fulfill your athletes' needs.

I. The first type of leg swings are most commonly utilized during a warmup.

1. Sit on the ground, leaning back on the elbows with one leg bent and one leg straight out in front. Swing the straight leg very aggressively forward over the head and down, then swing the leg sideways to shoulder and down. This is repeated 4-8 times with good body alignment! (Full range of motion, proper body alignment and speed is a must.) Then repeat with the other leg.



2. Get on the floor on hands and knees with one leg extended straight backward. Drive the leg up as high as the leg can go without arching the back or losing good body alignment; and then drive the leg back down to the floor. Now drive the leg sideways to the shoulder and back down to the floor in back. The stomach should be held tight and the back held flat during the entire exercise. (Later this moves into more advanced leg positions.) This is done 4-8 times on both sides.

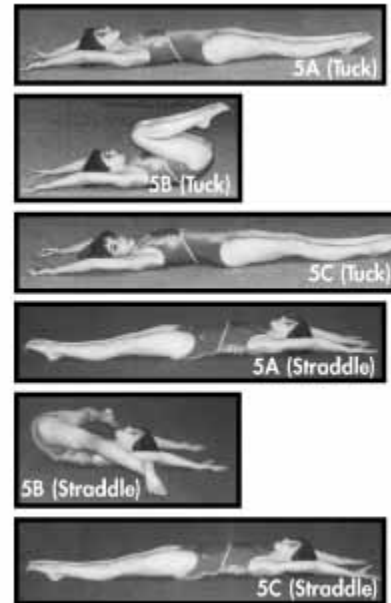


3. Lie in a prone position with hips pressed to the floor and stomach in. Drive the legs up and down one at a time very aggressively, 4-8 times each. Then drive the legs at the same time. (More advanced leg swing in this position comes later.)



4. Sit on the right hip with the right leg bent and the left leg straight to the side. Swing the left leg all the way forward in front of head and all the way backward as far as possible, keeping the leg straight at first, then bend the leg when it's in back. This is also done 4-8 times. Repeat on each side.

5. Lie on the back with the legs straight out. Perform fast shaping of the legs in a tuck, pike and straddle, shaping to the position very quickly and opening very quickly. Do 5-10 of each shape. First find the correct shape you want to achieve during your tumbling, dance, dismounts and so on before the shapes are done fast. When the athlete gets better and faster, she needs to be on a soft surface or on panel mats so her heels don't hit the ground. It's very important to keep the lower back down on the ground at all times and the ribs in and flat. (Later there are more advanced shaping drills.)



6. Stand up in a pike position with the hands on the floor. Perform one leg kick to a needle scale, (5-10 on each side) with the legs straight, then bend both legs on the way down and straighten on the way up to the needle scale. Repeat in this position 5-10 times.

7. From a stand, step forward on the right foot and kick the left leg over the head. Then step backward on left foot, put hands on floor by left foot, and kick right leg to a needle scale in the back. Stand up and step forward and repeat 4-8 times. Then repeat on other side.

8. Moving across the floor, step forward on the right foot, kick the left foot very fast to full range over the head and bring the leg down just as quickly. Step forward with the left foot and turn a quarter turn to the left and quickly kick the right leg sideways over the head, then bring the right foot down just as fast. Continue to step on the right foot and make another quarter turn to the right and kick the left leg back to arabesque very quickly and as high as possible. Take a step with the left leg and make a quarter turn to the right again to repeat on the other side. Do this all the way across the floor alternating sides. This can also be done on the beam.

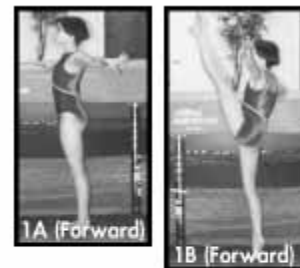
II. The next leg swing can be done at the ballet bar or at the beam area.

1. Grand battements forward, sideways and backward. These are to be done in the dance positions 1st and 5th.

2. They can be turned out and in parallel position.

3. Leg swings should simulate all leg positions used in gymnastics (ring, attitude, sheep, etc.)

4. Leg swings should be done a) with straight leg swings pushing off the feet; b) straight leg swings with foot free of floor; and c) bent leg swings with foot pushing off the



floor.

5. From a stand or kneeling position on one knee on the beam, execute leg swings simulating a leap or jump.

III. The next leg swings can be done during the events or anywhere else you can fit them into your workout.



1. Lie in a prone position on a vaulting horse with your legs hanging off. Execute leg kicks from the hanging position up to the height of the horse. Drive the legs up aggressively. Start with a small number and work up to 10, then add tubing to increase the speed and dynamics.

2. Stand on the floor with one foot on a block. Execute very quick knee lifts as you stand up on the block. Repeat 10 times. When this is successfully achieved, jump up off block as knee lifts up and go back down to stand.

3. Stand on the ground with one foot on a block (knee or hip high). Stand up on block and kick other leg to the back at a 90 degree angle (arabesque).

4. Hang on a high bar or a stall bar so the back is kept from swinging. Execute fast leg kicks in a tuck position, pike position and a straddle position. Do 5-10 in a row.

5. Hang on a high bar. Execute very fast leg drives in a split position. Do right side, left side, then switch from right to left. Do 5-10 in a row. Also can be done in a pike, wolf, and ring shape.



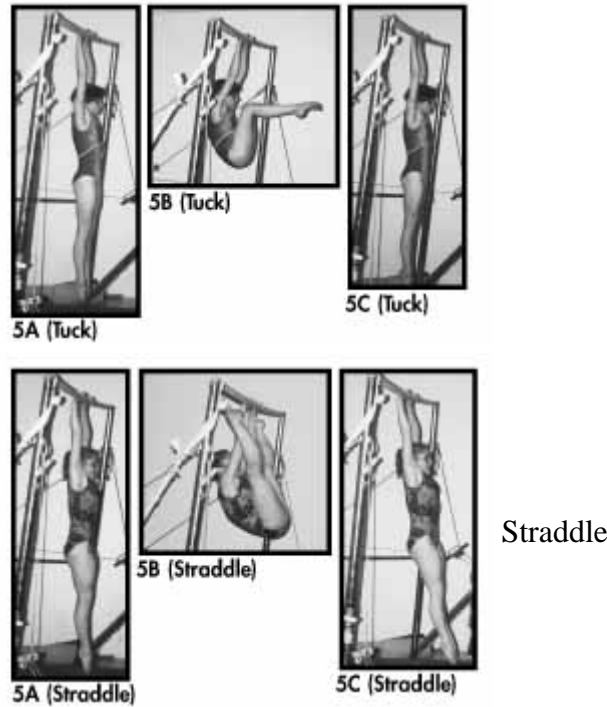
5A (Pike)

5B (Pike)

5C (Pike)

Pike

Tuck



6. Lie on a panel mat on your back so the legs hang off (to prevent heels from hitting the floor). Execute very fast leg drives into a tuck, pike and straddle and back to straight position. Do 5-10 of each shape. When the gymnast can execute this drill easily, then add tubing to increase speed and dynamics.

7. Perform fast leg drives on trampoline or tumble track in all the shapes for leaps and tumbling. (For example, switch leg jumps, tuck kick-out jumps, pike jumps, etc.) Do 5-10 of each shape.

The video entitled, "*Incorporating Leg Swings Into Your Workout*" item #2127 is available for \$20.00 by calling USA Gymnastics Member Services at 1-800-345-4719.

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