



Fitness— Staying Slope Fit

Contributed by Gene Fulkerson

Spending a full day on the slopes can be tiring even for the fittest individual. Here are some stretches to help your back.



⇒ **Ballerina Stretch**

Reach arms upward, clasping hands and fingers together over your head. Pull left arm to the right as you stretch over to the right, leaving arms fully extended overhead. Hold for five to ten seconds, then release and stretch to the left side. Hold on that side as well.

As you leave the fully extended position, put both hands on top of your head as you fully extend “chicken wings” out to the side. Twist your spine one way, first left, then right as you perform the twist with hands atop your head.



⇒ **Dog Down & Child's Pose**

This yoga-inspired active stretch truly works all of the muscles in the neck, upper back, lower back, and legs. Lower yourself to a V position, with your hands and feet pushing away from the ground and your head in neutral position. Hold this position as long as possible, feeling the muscles in your back and along the backs of your legs lengthen and strengthen while your neck muscles rest in a neutral position, allowing for the release of additional tension.

Drop down into child's pose, a prone position where knees are bent and body is tucked in along the tops of legs while arms are extended forward away from the rest of the body. Relax in this position, taking deep breaths and deepening the stretch as you are able.



⇒ **Cat Cow**

Lower yourself to your hands and knees. Start by inhaling, releasing your belly toward the floor, and flexing your back so that its surface looks like a bowl. As you exhale, bend your head toward the ground, arch your back like a cat, and fully extend your spine into what resembles a C curve. Combine breathing with the concave, convex motion of this exercise and you will increase the mobility of the vertebrae and loosen up the joints along the spine.



⇒ **Superman**

Lie on your stomach on a firm surface. Slowly extend arms out as if you were Superman, then work to raise arms and upper body off the ground as much as possible, using the strength from your lower back and torso. Hold for 2-3 seconds, then return to the floor. Repeat ten times with upper body, then lift the legs and buttocks the same way, holding for 2-3 seconds and returning to the floor.

As a culminating move, and if you are strong enough, combine the lower body extension with the upper body extension, hold, and then return to the floor. Tightening that core will reduce lower back pain and strengthen your whole body from the inside out. ■