



YOUTH ATHLETE PERFORMANCE SERIES

THE PREGAME WARM-UP

A science-backed 20-minute RAMP routine for young athletes, ages 7 to 18. Every sport, every skill level, ready from the first whistle.

20

MINUTES

4

PHASES

7-18

AGES

ALL

SPORTS

THE BETTER ATHLETE

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THE PREGAME WARM-UP: A 20-MINUTE RAMP ROUTINE FOR AGES 7 TO 18

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IMPORTANT: READ FIRST

This guide is an educational resource for coaches, parents, and athletes. It is not medical advice and does not replace a physician, pediatrician, or licensed athletic trainer. Every young athlete should be medically cleared to play before a season. Any pain, injury, or health concern should be evaluated by a qualified professional, and an athlete with a known injury or condition should follow their own clinician's guidance first.

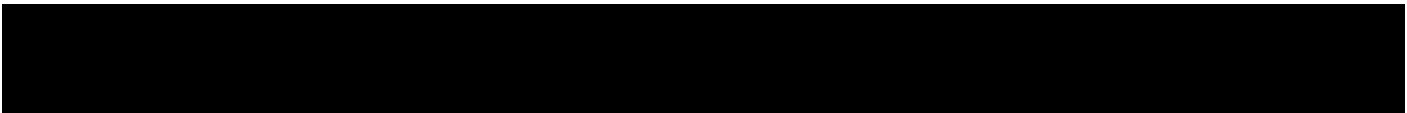
The warm-up here is general and cannot account for an individual athlete's medical history. Used as intended, as a gradual, supervised, pain-free preparation for activity, it is appropriate for healthy young athletes. The publisher accepts no liability for injury or loss arising from its use.

BASIS OF THIS GUIDE

The routine follows the RAMP framework (Raise, Activate, Mobilize, Potentiate), a widely used, evidence-based approach to structuring an effective warm-up, adapted here for the growing bodies of youth athletes in line with accepted principles of long-term athletic development.

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SECTION 01

HOW TO USE THIS WARM-UP

What you need, the 20-minute structure, and the one rule that makes the whole routine work. Read this first.

[What You Need](#) / [The Structure](#) / [The One Rule](#)

HOW TO USE THIS WARM-UP

This is a 20-minute pregame warm-up for young athletes, ages seven to eighteen, built to work for any sport and any skill level. It uses the RAMP framework, the structure sports scientists use to prepare an athlete's body to perform and to lower injury risk. Run it before games and before hard practices, in order, every time.

WHAT YOU NEED

This warm-up is designed to run with almost nothing. All you truly need is a bit of space and a few cones or markers. Anything else is optional.

EQUIPMENT	NEEDED?
Open space	Required. A field, court, gym, or a marked area roughly 20 yards long.
Cones or markers	Recommended. 4 to 8 cones to mark distances and drills. Water bottles or shoes work in a pinch.
Resistance bands	Optional. A few light bands add value to the Activate phase, but every band exercise has a no-equipment version.
A ball	Optional. Adding the sport's ball to the final phase makes the warm-up more sport-specific.

THE 20-MINUTE STRUCTURE AT A GLANCE

PHASE	TIME	GOAL	WHAT IT DOES FOR THE BODY
R • Raise	4 to 5 min	Raise body temperature and heart rate	Warms the muscles, gets blood flowing, and wakes up the body gently.
A • Activate	4 to 5 min	Switch on the key muscles	Turns on the glutes, core, and shoulders that protect the joints during play.
M • Mobilize	4 to 5 min	Move the joints through full range	Loosens the hips, ankles, and shoulders so they move freely and safely.
P • Potentiate	5 to 6 min	Ramp up to full game speed	Builds from easy to fast so the athlete hits the first whistle already at game intensity.

Activate and Mobilize overlap in practice and are often done together, flowing from one movement to the next. This guide keeps them as separate ideas so you understand the purpose of each, but on the field they blend into one smooth block.

THE ONE RULE THAT MAKES RAMP WORK

The whole point is to build gradually. The warm-up starts easy and ends at full game speed, so that by the time the game begins, the body is already there. Never start with the hardest movement, and never jump straight to sprinting. Each phase prepares the body for the next. Follow the order, and the athlete steps onto the field ready and protected.

READING THIS GUIDE FOR YOUR ATHLETES

The routine is written once and then adjusted for three age groups and three skill levels. Run the same movements for everyone, and use the adjustment guide to dial the intensity, complexity, and coaching up or down for the group

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SECTION 02

THE RAMP FRAMEWORK

What each of the four phases is for, and why this beats the old stretch-and-play approach. The science in plain language.

Raise / Activate / Mobilize / Potentiate

THE RAMP FRAMEWORK

RAMP stands for Raise, Activate, Mobilize, and Potentiate. It is a simple, evidence-based way to structure a warm-up so that every minute has a purpose. Here is what each phase is for, before the full routine that follows.

R · RAISE

Light, continuous movement that raises body temperature, heart rate, and breathing rate. Warm muscles are more elastic and less prone to injury, and a raised heart rate delivers more oxygen to working muscles. This phase should leave the athlete warm and lightly breathing, never tired.

A · ACTIVATE

Targeted movements that switch on the muscles that stabilize and protect the joints, especially the glutes, the core, and the muscles around the shoulders. These muscles often sit quiet until they are deliberately woken up. Activating them first means they are ready to do their job the moment play begins, which is a direct injury-prevention benefit.

M · MOBILIZE

Dynamic movements that take the joints through the full range of motion the sport will demand. This is active, moving stretching, not the old-style hold-and-count stretching. Dynamic mobility prepares the joints for movement without the temporary loss of power that long static stretches can cause before activity. Save the long, held stretches for after the game.

P · POTENTIATE

Sport-specific drills that ramp the athlete up from moderate to full game intensity. This is where acceleration, agility, and the actual movements of the sport come in. The word potentiate means to make more powerful, and that is the goal: to leave the athlete primed, fast, and ready to compete from the first whistle. This phase is what separates a warm-up that prevents injury from one that also improves performance.

WHY NOT JUST STRETCH AND PLAY?

The old approach, a few static stretches and onto the field, is outdated. Long static stretches before activity can briefly reduce power and do little to prepare the body for the demands of the sport. Worse, cold muscles asked to move fast are muscles at risk. RAMP replaces that with a structured build-up that warms, activates, mobilizes, and primes the body in the right order. It takes the same twenty minutes and does far more.



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SECTION 03

THE 20-MINUTE ROUTINE

The complete warm-up, phase by phase, with the exercise, the dose, and the coaching cues for each movement. Run it in order, every time.

Raise / Activate / Mobilize / Potentiate

THE 20-MINUTE ROUTINE

Here is the full warm-up, one phase at a time. Each table gives the exercise, how long or how many, and the coaching cues that keep the movement safe and correct. Run the phases in order. Start easy, finish at game speed.

R · RAISE

4 to 5 minutes

Increase body temperature and heart rate

EXERCISE	DURATION / REPS	COACHING CUES
Easy Jog	60 seconds	Relaxed and light. You should be able to talk easily. Stay tall, look ahead, land softly.
Jog with Arm Circles	30 seconds	Keep jogging. Circle the arms forward, then backward. Loosen the shoulders as you go.
Side Shuffle	30 seconds each way	Stay low, chest up. Do not click the heels together. Push off the outside foot.
Backward Jog	30 seconds	Stay on the balls of the feet. Short steps. Look over your shoulder to stay safe.
Skipping	45 seconds	Drive the knee up, land softly on the ball of the foot. Light and springy, not heavy.
Butt Kicks into High Knees	45 seconds	Heels to the seat, then knees to hip height. Quick feet, tall posture, arms driving.

A · ACTIVATE

4 to 5 minutes

Switch on the stabilizing muscles

EXERCISE	DURATION / REPS	COACHING CUES
Glute Bridge	10 reps	On your back, feet flat. Squeeze the seat muscles and lift the hips. Ribs down, hold one second at the top.
Lateral Band Walk (or Bodyweight)	8 steps each way	Band above the knees, or none. Stay low, feet parallel, push out against the band. Do not let the knees cave in.
Plank	20 to 30 seconds	Straight line from head to heels. Squeeze the stomach and the seat. Do not let the hips sag.
Bird Dog	5 each side	On hands and knees. Reach the opposite arm and leg out long, hold, then switch. Keep the hips level and still.
Band Pull-Apart (or Arm Sweeps)	10 reps	Band or no band. Pull the hands apart across the chest, squeeze the shoulder blades. Keep the ribs down.

M · MOBILIZE

4 to 5 minutes

Move the joints through full range

EXERCISE	DURATION / REPS	COACHING CUES
Walking Lunge with a Twist	5 each side	Step into a lunge, then gently twist the upper body over the front leg. Front knee over the foot, not caving in.
Leg Swings, Front to Back	10 each leg	Hold something for balance. Swing one leg forward and back, controlled, letting the range grow.
Leg Swings, Side to Side	10 each leg	Same idea, now swinging the leg across the body and out. Keep the upper body tall and still.
World's Greatest Stretch	4 each side	Long lunge, one hand down, reach the other arm to the sky and follow it with your eyes. Move slowly.
Ankle Rocks	8 each side	In a lunge, drive the front knee forward over the toes, keeping the heel down. Feel the ankle open.
Arm and Shoulder Circles	8 each direction	Big, slow circles forward then backward. Loosen the shoulders fully before any throwing or overhead work.

P · POTENTIATE

5 to 6 minutes

Ramp up to full game speed

EXERCISE	DURATION / REPS	COACHING CUES
Build-Up Runs	3 runs of 20 yards	Start easy, finish fast. First run 60 percent, second 75, third 90. Smooth acceleration, never a jerky start.
A-Skip	2 runs of 15 yards	Tall posture, drive the knee up, toe up, land quiet under the hip. Good running form at a controlled speed.
Lateral Shuffle to Sprint	3 each direction	Shuffle low for a few steps, then turn and sprint out. Stay low in the shuffle, explode into the sprint.
Change of Direction (Cone Cuts)	4 reps	Run to a cone, plant the outside foot, and cut. Bend the knees, stay low, push off. Do not round the corner.
Acceleration Sprints	3 to 4 reps of 15 yards	Near full speed. Lean forward at the start, drive the arms, push the ground away. Full rest between each.
Sport-Specific Movement	1 to 2 minutes	The real movement of your sport at game speed: a few shots, a few passes, a few swings. Finish here, ready to go.



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SECTION 04

ADJUSTING FOR AGE AND SKILL

The same routine, dialed up or down for three age groups and three skill levels, plus what to do when time is short.

[By Age](#) / [By Skill](#) / [Time-Saving](#)

ADJUSTING FOR AGE AND SKILL

The same four phases and the same movements work for every young athlete. What changes is the speed, the complexity, and how much you coach versus how much you let them go. Use these guides to fit the routine to the group in front of you.

BY AGE GROUP

AGE	THE FOCUS	HOW TO RUN IT
Ages 7 to 9	Fun, movement, and basic coordination	Keep it playful. Turn drills into games and races. Do not worry about perfect form, worry about happy, moving kids who learn to love warming up. Keep instructions to one idea at a time. Shorten holds and cut reps in half. This age has a short attention span, so keep it moving and keep it light.
Ages 10 to 13	Learning good movement habits	This is the age to teach real technique, because bodies are ready to learn skill and habits formed now last. Introduce the coaching cues and expect athletes to try to hit them. Add the landing and cutting quality that protects the knee. Watch closely during growth spurts, when coordination dips and flexibility drops temporarily.
Ages 14 to 18	Full intensity and sport-specific prep	Run the full routine at full speed and full expectation. Hold athletes to the coaching cues. Add the resistance band work, push the potentiate phase to true game intensity, and make the final phase specific to the sport and even the position. This group can handle and benefits from the complete routine.

BY SKILL LEVEL

LEVEL	HOW TO ADJUST
Beginner	Slow everything down. Teach one movement at a time and let athletes master it before adding speed. Use the simplest version of every exercise, the no-equipment options, and shorter distances. Over-coach the form. It is far better to do a simple movement well than a complex one badly.
Intermediate	Run the routine as written. Athletes know the movements, so focus on quality and on building good speed through the potentiate phase. Add the resistance bands. Begin making the final phase specific to the sport.
Elite	Push the intensity and the specificity. The potentiate phase should genuinely reach game speed, with sharp cuts, full-effort accelerations, and the exact movement patterns of the sport and position. Keep the earlier phases honest, since even elite athletes skip the boring parts if allowed, and those parts are what protect them.

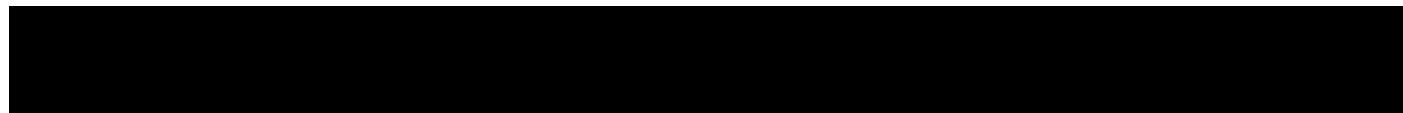
THE UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE ACROSS ALL GROUPS

No matter the age or level, the order never changes and the build-up never gets skipped. A beginner seven year old and an elite seventeen year old both start with an easy raise and both finish at their version of full speed. The intensity at the end differs enormously. The structure does not.

TIME-SAVING OPTIONS

Twenty minutes is the target. When the clock is tight, shorten, do not skip. Cutting a phase entirely removes the exact preparation the next phase depends on.

IF YOU HAVE	WHAT TO DO
20 minutes	Run the full routine as written. This is the goal.
12 to 15 minutes	Trim each phase, keeping at least one or two movements from each of the four. Never drop a whole phase.
Under 10 minutes	One raise movement, one activate, two mobilize, and a proper set of build-up runs into a few accelerations. Short, but the whole ramp is intact.



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SECTION 05

SAFETY NOTES FOR YOUNG BODIES

The specific adjustments that keep a warm-up safe for growing bodies. Simple, and they protect the athletes in your care.

[Why Young Bodies Differ](#) / [The Safety Points](#) / [Keeping It Pain-Free](#)

SAFETY NOTES FOR YOUNG BODIES

Young athletes are still growing, and their bodies have specific needs an adult's does not. These adjustments keep the warm-up safe and effective for growing bodies. None of them are complicated, and following them protects the athletes in your care.

WHY YOUNG BODIES ARE DIFFERENT

A young athlete is not a small adult. Their bones are still growing at soft zones called growth plates, which can be more vulnerable than the muscles and tendons around them. During growth spurts, bones can lengthen faster than muscles keep up, which temporarily reduces flexibility and coordination. The warm-up is where you account for this, gently and every time.

SAFETY POINT	WHAT TO DO AND WHY
Never skip the gradual build-up	A young body asked to sprint or cut hard while cold is a young body at risk. The whole ramp exists to prevent exactly that. This is the single most important safety rule.
Use dynamic movement, not long held stretches	Before activity, keep stretching active and moving. Save the long, held stretches for the cool-down after the game, when the muscles are warm. Long static stretches on cold muscles do not prepare the body well.
Coach the landing and the knee	On every jump, hop, and cut, the knee should bend and track over the toes, never cave inward. This is the movement pattern that protects the knee, and warming up is where it becomes a habit.
Watch closely during growth spurts	When an athlete grows quickly, expect a temporary dip in flexibility and coordination. Do not mistake it for laziness. Give a little more time on mobility and do not push through new tightness.
Keep it pain-free	A warm-up should never hurt. Mild effort and a feeling of warmth are good. Sharp pain, joint pain, or pain in one specific spot means stop and check, not push through.
Quality over quantity, always	A few well-performed movements protect a young athlete far more than many rushed, sloppy ones. Slow down and get it right, especially with beginners and younger children.
Hydrate and mind the heat	Young athletes overheat faster than adults. In hot weather, keep the warm-up in the shade if possible, build in water, and shorten it if needed. A warm-up should not leave a young athlete overheated before the game starts.
Adjust for the individual	An athlete returning from injury, or one who is clearly tired or unwell, warms up at their own pace or sits out. The routine serves the athlete, never the other way around.

THE SIMPLE SAFETY RULE TO TEACH EVERY ATHLETE

Warm-up should make you feel warm, loose, and ready, never sore or in pain. If something hurts in a sharp or specific way, stop and tell a coach. Speaking up early is what smart athletes do. It is never weakness, and it is how a small problem stays small.

A NOTE ON THIS GUIDE

This is a general warm-up guide for healthy young athletes and is meant for education, not medical advice. It does not replace a doctor, a pediatrician, or an athletic trainer. Every athlete should be medically cleared to play, and any pain, injury, or concern should be checked by a qualified professional. An athlete with a known injury or medical condition should follow the guidance of their own clinician, which always comes first.

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SECTION 06

COACH'S QUICK REFERENCE

The entire routine on one page. Keep it on the clipboard and run it straight through.

The Full Routine at a Glance

COACH'S QUICK REFERENCE

Once you know the routine, this is the page to keep on the clipboard. The whole 20-minute warm-up on a single sheet, ready to run.

THE FULL ROUTINE, ONE PAGE

EXERCISE	DOSE	KEY CUE
R RAISE · INCREASE BODY TEMPERATURE AND HEART RATE · 4 TO 5 MINUTES		
Easy Jog	60 seconds	Relaxed and light. You should be able to talk easily. Stay tall, look ahead, land softly.
Jog with Arm Circles	30 seconds	Keep jogging. Circle the arms forward, then backward. Loosen the shoulders as you go.
Side Shuffle	30 seconds each way	Stay low, chest up. Do not click the heels together. Push off the outside foot.
Backward Jog	30 seconds	Stay on the balls of the feet. Short steps. Look over your shoulder to stay safe.
Skipping	45 seconds	Drive the knee up, land softly on the ball of the foot. Light and springy, not heavy.
Butt Kicks into High Knees	45 seconds	Heels to the seat, then knees to hip height. Quick feet, tall posture, arms driving.
A ACTIVATE · SWITCH ON THE STABILIZING MUSCLES · 4 TO 5 MINUTES		
Glute Bridge	10 reps	On your back, feet flat. Squeeze the seat muscles and lift the hips. Ribs down, hold one second at the top.
Lateral Band Walk (or Bodyweight)	8 steps each way	Band above the knees, or none. Stay low, feet parallel, push out against the band. Do not let the knees cave in.
Plank	20 to 30 seconds	Straight line from head to heels. Squeeze the stomach and the seat. Do not let the hips sag.
Bird Dog	5 each side	On hands and knees. Reach the opposite arm and leg out long, hold, then switch. Keep the hips level and still.
Band Pull-Apart (or Arm Sweeps)	10 reps	Band or no band. Pull the hands apart across the chest, squeeze the shoulder blades. Keep the ribs down.
M MOBILIZE · MOVE THE JOINTS THROUGH FULL RANGE · 4 TO 5 MINUTES		
Walking Lunge with a Twist	5 each side	Step into a lunge, then gently twist the upper body over the front leg. Front knee over the foot, not caving in.
Leg Swings, Front to Back	10 each leg	Hold something for balance. Swing one leg forward and back, controlled, letting the range grow.
Leg Swings, Side to Side	10 each leg	Same idea, now swinging the leg across the body and out. Keep the upper body tall and still.
World's Greatest Stretch	4 each side	Long lunge, one hand down, reach the other arm to the sky and follow it with your eyes. Move slowly.
Ankle Rocks	8 each side	In a lunge, drive the front knee forward over the toes, keeping the heel down. Feel the ankle open.
Arm and Shoulder Circles	8 each direction	Big, slow circles forward then backward. Loosen the shoulders fully before any throwing or overhead work.

EXERCISE	DOSE	KEY CUE
P POTENTIATE · RAMP UP TO FULL GAME SPEED · 5 TO 6 MINUTES		
Build-Up Runs	3 runs of 20 yards	Start easy, finish fast. First run 60 percent, second 75, third 90. Smooth acceleration, never a jerky start.
A-Skip	2 runs of 15 yards	Tall posture, drive the knee up, toe up, land quiet under the hip. Good running form at a controlled speed.
Lateral Shuffle to Sprint	3 each direction	Shuffle low for a few steps, then turn and sprint out. Stay low in the shuffle, explode into the sprint.
Change of Direction (Cone Cuts)	4 reps	Run to a cone, plant the outside foot, and cut. Bend the knees, stay low, push off. Do not round the corner.
Acceleration Sprints	3 to 4 reps of 15 yards	Near full speed. Lean forward at the start, drive the arms, push the ground away. Full rest between each.
Sport-Specific Movement	1 to 2 minutes	The real movement of your sport at game speed: a few shots, a few passes, a few swings. Finish here, ready to go.



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SECTION 07

COACHING THE WARM-UP WELL

How to run these twenty minutes so they set the tone for everything that follows.

Make It a Habit / Set the Standard / Coach, Do Not Count

COACHING THE WARM-UP WELL

A warm-up is more than a checklist. Run it well and it sets the tone for everything that follows. Here is how to get the most from these twenty minutes.

MAKE IT A HABIT, NOT A CHORE

The best warm-up is the one that actually gets done, every time, with real effort. Run it in the same order each game so it becomes automatic. Within a few weeks, older athletes should be able to lead it themselves, which builds ownership and leadership at the same time. A team that warms up well together starts the game together.

SET THE STANDARD FROM THE FIRST MOVEMENT

The energy and focus you accept in the warm-up is the energy and focus you get in the game. If the warm-up is walked through, the first few minutes of play often are too. Run it at tempo, expect real effort, and the team steps onto the field switched on and ready.

COACH, DO NOT JUST COUNT

The coaching cues in this guide are what turn movement into good movement. Use them. Call an athlete by name and give one clear cue, then let them try again. Praise the effort and the good repetitions. A warm-up where the knees are coached to track over the toes and the landings are coached to be soft is a warm-up that quietly prevents injuries every single day.

THE WHOLE GUIDE IN ONE SENTENCE

Build gradually through Raise, Activate, Mobilize, and Potentiate, coach the form as you go, keep it pain-free and fun for the age in front of you, and every athlete steps onto the field warm, switched on, mobile, and ready to compete from the first whistle.

A FINAL WORD

Twenty minutes, four phases, done well and done consistently. That is the whole thing. A good warm-up will not guarantee a win, but it gives every athlete the best possible chance to perform at their best and to walk off the field as healthy as they walked on. For a young athlete with years of sport ahead of them, that is worth every one of these twenty minutes.