

# Warming Up (Latif Thomas: [www.CompleteSpeedTraining.com](http://www.CompleteSpeedTraining.com))



When you start your vehicle on a cold morning, what do you do?

You let it warm up for a few minutes before trying to drive it. Otherwise, acceleration is terrible, and, you risk seriously damaging your engine because oil and other fluids haven't had the chance to heat up parts that make your car run efficiently.

Well, think of your athletes like a car.

If you try to get them to run at full speed before they are properly warmed up, their acceleration will be terrible and you risk a serious muscle pull or tear because blood hasn't had a chance to heat up the muscles that allow the athlete to run quickly and efficiently.

Does that make sense?

The most glaring evidence I have in support of a good warm-up is the behavior of the athletes that I coach.

They'll come to me from their sports having primarily used static stretching to warm up. If they did do some type of movement based, dynamic warm up, it was sloppy and followed no particular pattern.

After working with me, not only do they run much faster and feel better; they couldn't imagine warming up any other way! When I go watch their competitions, I see them out there with their teammates using my warm-up!

Listen, the warm up doesn't have to be complicated. It just has to follow a few basic premises.

But before I list them I will say this...

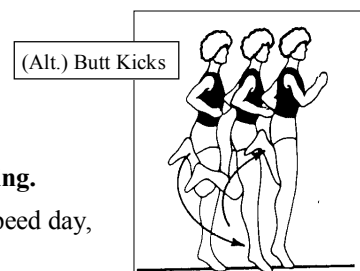
In my experience, if you've been using static stretching at the beginning of practice, you shouldn't just stop cold turkey. Most athletes have been doing this at the start of every practice, for every sport, for their entire lives.

It's hardwired into their heads that they need to do it to get warmed up properly, even though it isn't true. So, I don't cut it out completely. Instead, I'll give them 5 minutes to stretch out on their own before we start our full warm up. This way they feel like they got a 'pre-stretch' and it gives them a chance to see what their tight spots are.

OK, let's get to the basic principles behind the warm up. But I will warn you - once you read this you have no excuse for using static stretching or a sloppy, unorganized dynamic warm up with your athletes.

## 1. Progress from slow, simple movements to faster, more complex movements.

Think back to my 'cold car' analogy. Your athletes have to start with movements that aren't going to put muscles in a position to pull or tear because they aren't fully warmed up.



## 2. A good warm-up will have your athletes slightly out of breath and lightly sweating.

Anything less than this and they aren't ready to go at full speed. This means that on a speed day, the warm-up should take a good 20 minutes.

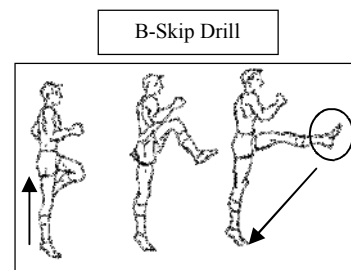
Remember, our goal is to make athletes faster. You can't cheat the warm up and expect athletes to achieve their goals.

How you'll decide those numbers depends, again, on your training goals for that day.

## 3. Make sure your athletes do the drills with perfect form every time!

You'd think this was a no-brainer, but in my experience that couldn't be further from the truth. The majority of the time, even in programs that claim to use a dynamic warm-up, athletes' technique is so sloppy that it is almost counter-productive. I'm serious!

“UP” ► “OUT” ►  
“Pull to the Ground”  
Beneath hip, just in front of support foot



In addition to being a great warm-up, these drills also work on running mechanics, coordination and flexibility.

If athletes just go through the motions by doing the drills half-assed, then they're only setting themselves up to get injured. Show your athletes how to do each drill correctly and get on them when they're not putting in the effort. I've kicked kids out of practice on more than one occasion because they didn't focus on their drills. If that takes too much effort to do correctly, then how can I expect them to execute properly in the workout or the competition?

*There is no excuse for telling athletes to do a certain type of drill if they don't know how to do it right and you can't tell them how to fix any mechanical problems.*

## 4. Don't do the same warm-up every single day.

Athletes will quickly get bored doing the same old warm-up. That means the drills will be sloppy, they won't get warmed up correctly and they set themselves up for injury. Variety is one of the keys to getting the most out of your team.

If the warm-up gets monotonous, kids will go through the motions. So you should switch your warm-up routines a few times every season so athletes don't get bored and lazy before practice even starts.

If they're lethargic from a warm-up they've been doing every day for the past two months, what do you really expect to get out of them in their speed workout?

