

# Back to Basics

By Brianne Carlon

## THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF STRETCHING

Model: Daphne Fernberger | Consultant: Hilary Cartwright

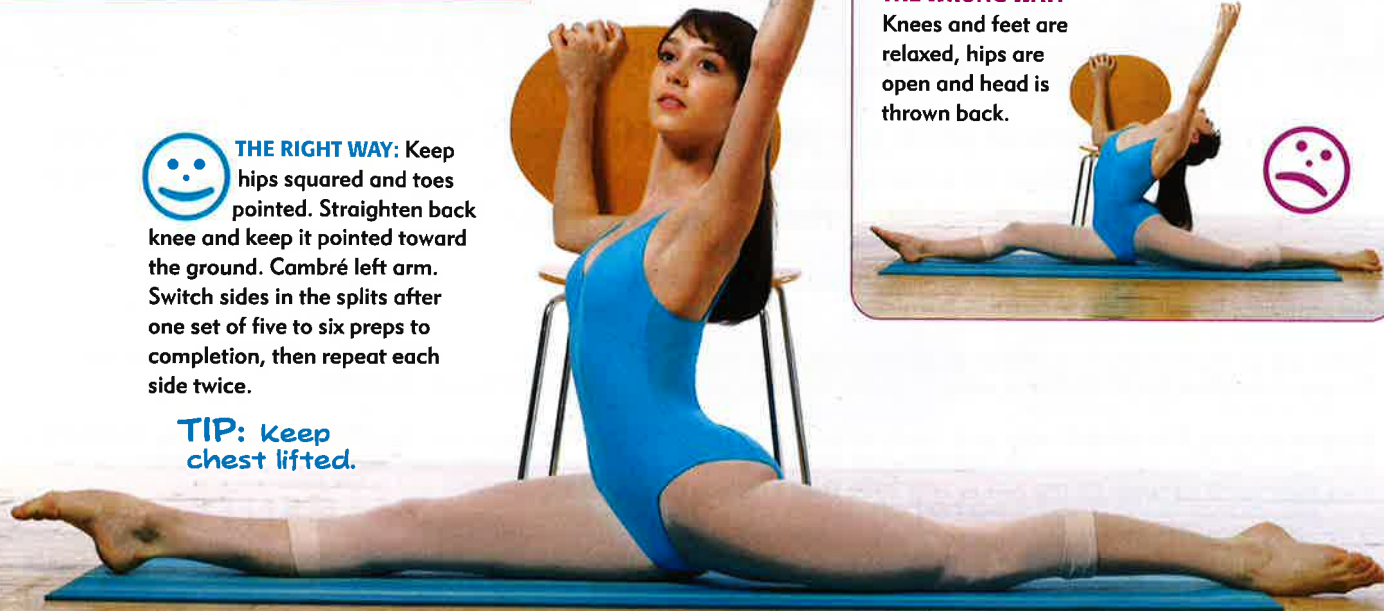
Are you a dancer who just can't get enough of a stretch in class, so you spend nights sitting in front of the television with your legs in a straddle, your toes pointed and your chin in your hands? If the answer is yes, stop right there! Believe it or not, there is new information out there that's proving old ways of stretching could actually be bad for you. In fact, static stretching (holding a stretch without moving for more than 30 seconds) could weaken your muscles. For example, overstretching your calves could result in less power for your petit allegro. Also, stretching in the wrong position can be dangerous!

DS called in expert Hilary Cartwright to show us her approach to the do's and don'ts of stretching. Read on to see the correct positions and strategies for dancers. DS

**BEFORE YOU STRETCH**, warm up the body with aerobic exercise (like light jogging) for five to 10 minutes. Then allow 10 seconds for each stretch on a continuous exhale, recover and relax. Then repeat all 5 to 6 times.

**THE RIGHT WAY:** Keep hips squared and toes pointed. Straighten back knee and keep it pointed toward the ground. Cambré left arm. Switch sides in the splits after one set of five to six preps to completion, then repeat each side twice.

**TIP:** Keep chest lifted.



### STRETCH: SPLITS STEP 1: THE PREP



**THE WRONG WAY:** Right leg is forward with foot straight ahead. Back hip is open and hip bones are sunken.

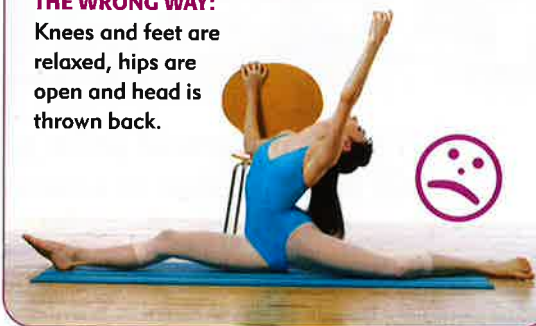
**THE RIGHT WAY:** Begin in a lunge with the right leg forward at 90 degrees and foot turned out (inset photo). Lean forward to feel a stretch in the hip and quad. Next, straighten front leg with toes pointed (hold on to a chair or barre with right hand for support if needed). Continue lowering until left leg is straight. When comfortable, add left cambré arm.

**TIP:** Keep chest up.



### STEP 2: GOING FOR IT!

**THE WRONG WAY:** Knees and feet are relaxed, hips are open and head is thrown back.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT KARAS; HAIR AND MAKEUP BY ANGELA HUFF FOR MARK EDWARD, INC.

### STRETCH: STRADDLE



**THE WRONG WAY:** Hips are rolled forward, toes are pointed and elbows are on the ground.

Following her career as a soloist with *The Royal Ballet in England*, Hilary Cartwright became a director, teacher, coach and stager. She's been teaching *Yoga for Dancers* for the past 20 years after opening *White Cloud Studio* in NYC. [www.hilarycartwright.com](http://www.hilarycartwright.com)

Daphne Fernberger is a Level 7 student at *American Ballet Theatre's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School*.



**THE RIGHT WAY:** Start by sitting in an easy straddle. Place hands behind bottom, chest lifted, and stretch lower back. Flex feet strongly.

**TIPS:**  
1. Keep back long and stretched.  
2. Do not roll through straddle.

### STRETCH: THE FROG

**THE WRONG WAY:** Belly is down, butt is up, upper body is supported by elbows and stomach is dropped. (This position actually rotates legs in the wrong way.)



**THE RIGHT WAY:** Lie on back and bring feet into first position, turned out. Place arms to the side with palms down. Pull knees sideways with heels lifted until a stretch is felt in hip flexors. Engaging the back rotators slightly elevates the pelvis without tucking.

**TIPS:**  
1. Look straight up.  
2. Keep ribs down.



### STRETCH: HAMSTRINGS

**THE WRONG WAY:** Knees are slightly bent, neck is jutting forward and shoulders are hunched over.



**THE RIGHT WAY:** Start with legs directly in front of you and grab flexed feet from the outside (keeping arms straight). Lift your back, exhale and lean forward.

**TIPS:**  
1. Keep shoulders down.  
2. Stretch lower back.  
3. Don't arch.

