



# The Two Missing Components to Your Workout

*Paul Connolly, Certified Exercise Specialist*

Low back pain, general muscle and joint stiffness, and sub-optimum balance and muscular strength plague millions of Americans, particularly those of us who maintain a sedentary lifestyle. Technology devices such as computers, smartphones, and tablets have the ability to make our lives run more efficiently, but they also aid in the increased manifestation of physical health issues in far too many Americans. Exercise undoubtedly has the ability to rectify many of these issues, but one must not forget two critical elements of fitness:

**Mobility** – While muscles play a major role in strength training and cardiovascular exercise, the joints that facilitate motion all need proper warming up. This portion of the workout is called ‘Joint Mobilization.’ It is typically performed toward the beginning of a workout. Two of the joints in the body that lack- and require- mobility include the joints of the ankle and hip. Improving mobility in these areas helps to combat/reduce knee and back pain. What’s amazing about some of the specific mobility exercises is that they are extremely simple and offer a great ‘rate of return’ as they take minimal amounts of time to perform. Let’s review a couple of these movements:

- **Ankle Wall Mobility Drill** – With feet in a split stance and facing forward, simply rock the front knee to and from the wall for 2-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions just like [THIS](#). This will facilitate ankle mobility when performing variations of Squat exercises.
- **Hip Internal Rotation Stretch** – While laying on your back with your knees bent and toes flexed upward, rotate the knees in toward each other and then back to the starting position for 2-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions. The stretch should be felt throughout the hips and should look like [THIS](#).

**Balance** – Proprioception, a big word that basically means the awareness of where our body exists in space, starts to decline with age. Some studies have demonstrated that regular physical activity can reduce this age-related decline in proprioception. Very basic balance exercises help to strengthen the muscles and ligaments around the knee and ankle joints. Let's review two basic balance exercises:

- **Single Leg Stand** – These should be performed near a wall, chair, or stable surface to hold on to for assistance if needed. They can be performed in bare feet if desired and should look like [THIS](#).
- **Single Leg Stand with accessory motions** – This is the next step with single leg stands. In the fitness world, we call these 'Progressions.' Simply put, we need to find ways to make the exercise more challenging as your body adapts, and adding movement through the leg off the ground and arms provides an additional challenge. A nice sample of these progressions can be found by clicking [HERE](#).



*Certified through the National Strength and Conditioning Association as a personal trainer, Paul Connolly possesses a degree in Exercise Science from UMASS-Boston where he graduated Magna Cum Laude.*