

Perfect 10 Hand Exercises for Judges

By, Karen Bucaro Udowitch, MS



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Gymnastics judges' most valuable tools are their hands. Yet, this valuable asset's care, safety, and maintenance are neglected and taken for granted. The importance of hand care to enhance the ability to script effectively and efficiently while scoring gymnastics routines is essential.

Due to the repetitive nature of the scripting task, our hands are particularly prone to pain, stiffness, and swelling. That's where hand exercises come in. Refresh your hands by doing these exercises at the judge's table, throughout the day, or anywhere you have space and time. Enjoy improving your flexibility and relieve yourself from the hand stiffness of scripting routines.

Some tips to keep in mind before you start. Be gentle and mindful to perform all motions slowly and stop when you feel tension to avoid injury.

Breathe in through your nose and out with your mouth to help you relax. Please avoid holding your breath during any of these hand exercises.

Hand and Finger Warm-up

Warming your hands before you judge can help to alleviate hand and finger stiffness and possibly make your scripting easier. Suggestions include:

- Soaking your hands in warm water.
- Wrapping them in a heated towel.
- Using a heating pad for approximately five to ten (5-10) minutes.
- Wearing Aloe Vera hand gloves while you sleep.

Below are 10 Perfect Hand Exercises to help you stretch and strengthen your hands. Lets get started.

Stretches to help reduce stiffness at the judges table.

1. Finger Lift and Lower

- Place one hand palm side down on a table
- Starting with the thumb, lift one finger up and off the table at a time.
- Hold for 3 seconds. Relax.
- Repeat for each finger before switching hands.
- Challenge yourself to do both hands simultaneously for a cognitive bonus.



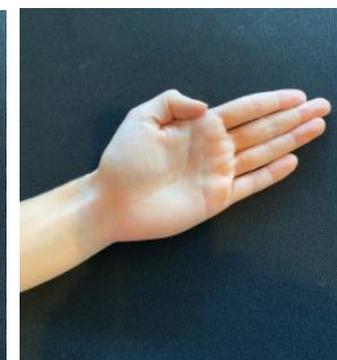
2. Fingertip Touch

- Touch your thumb to the fingertip on your pointer finger
- Hold for 3 seconds. Relax
- Continue with the remaining fingers in the same way.
- Try reversing the order by starting with your pinky finger first and ending with your pointer finger.



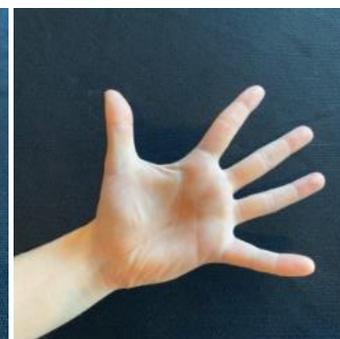
3. Thumb Spread

- Spread your thumb away from your hand.
- Hold for 3 counts. Relax your thumb back to your hand.
- Repeat 3 times and repeat with the opposite hand.
- Challenge yourself to do both hands simultaneously for a cognitive bonus.



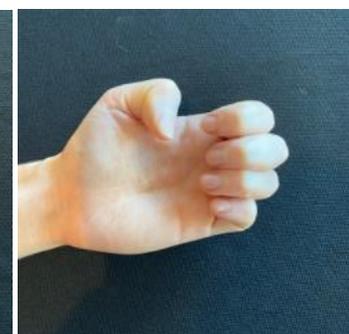
4. Make a Fist

- Make a fist, wrap your thumb around all of your fingers.
- Hold this position for 20-45 seconds, release and spread your fingers as wide as possible.
- Repeat 3-4 times on each hand.
- Challenge yourself to do both hands simultaneously for a cognitive bonus.



5. Claw Stretch

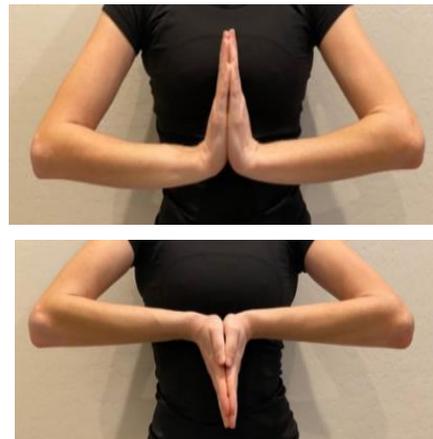
- Hold your hand with palm side up.
- Bend your fingertips down to touch finger pads like a claw.
- Hold for 20-45 seconds. Open hand.
- Repeat 3-4 times on each hand.
- Challenge yourself to do both hands simultaneously for a cognitive bonus.



Strengthening exercises to help reduce stiffness at the judges table.

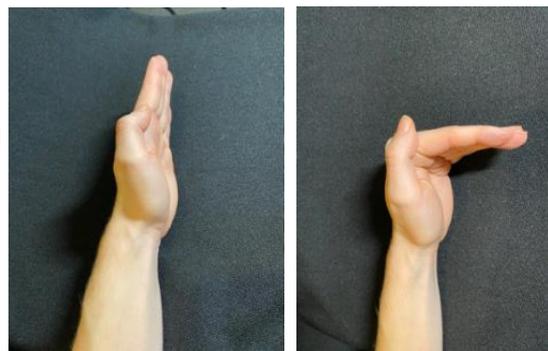
6. Palm Press (Sit or Stand)

- Place heels of palms together with fingers closed and fingertips pointing upward.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- While pressing your palms together, rotate your fingertips downward without separating your hands.
- Repeat at least 3 times.



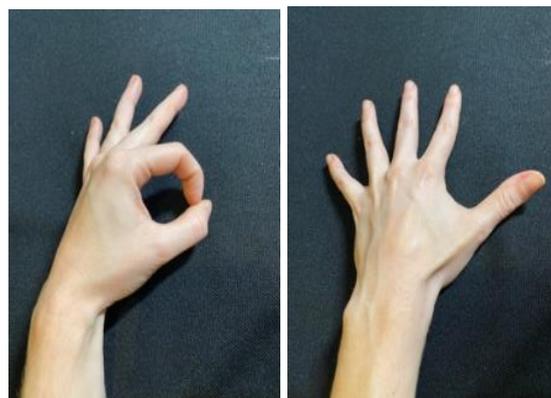
7. Arrow to Tabletop

- Start with fingers together in an arrow position.
- Make a tabletop by bending at the knuckles while keeping your fingers and wrist straight.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds. Repeat at least 3 times with each hand.
- Have palms face each other and do both hands at once like two duck bills acknowledging each other.



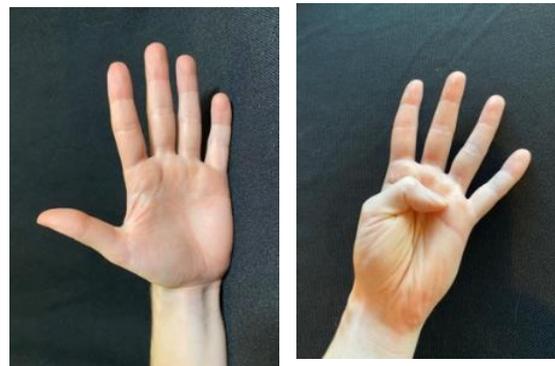
8. Making "O's"

- Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Make an "O" by touching your thumb to your fingertips one at a time.
- Open your hand wide after touching each finger
- Repeat at least 3 times with each hand.



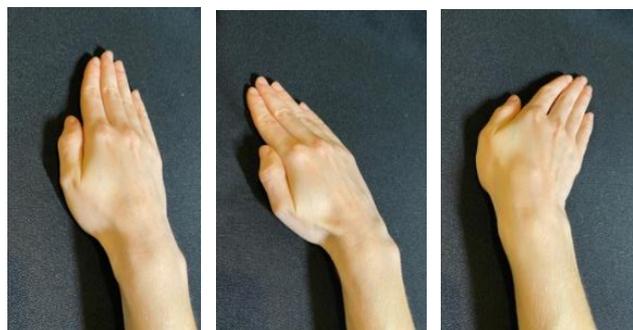
9. Thumb Extension and Flexion

- Start with your palm open.
- Move your thumb over to your pinky side,
- Continue to move your thumb back and forth between these 2 positions
- Repeat at least 3 times before switching hands.



10. Wrist Bend

- Hold fingers and wrist straight
- Bend the wrist toward the thumb and then toward the pinky finger.
- Repeat 8-10 times with each hand.



Summary

These hand exercises are a starting point to help you alleviate the stiffness caused by scripting gymnastics routines for hours at a time. Have some fun with your downtime at the judges' table. Play some hand games with Object Pickups in-between rotations to keep fingers from stiffing up. Place a large assortment of small objects on the judges' table, such as coins, buttons, paper clips, and stress balls.

- Pick up one object at a time by grasping it with your finger and thumb.
- Move the object to the opposite side of the table.
- Repeat with each object.
- Continue to do this throughout the rotation.

Each judge is different, and what feels right for you might not be most effective for another judge's pain or hand stiffness. If these exercises cause pain or discomfort, please stop immediately and talk with your doctor to determine which activities suit you.

References

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*Thank you to the hand model Heather Udowitch, for her patience and the use of her beautiful hands.

*The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.