



Big X

The Big X allows you to release and regain control of the muscles that laterally flex the spine and laterally tilt the pelvis (hike the hips up one at a time). The Big X is practiced by lying on the floor on your back, arms and legs stretched out, and reaching each arm and leg away from the center of your body one at a time. This exercise helps to relieve pain and improve range of motion in the shoulders and hips, and relieve functional leg length discrepancy and idiopathic scoliosis.

EXERCISE DESCRIPTION

Starting Position: Lie on your back with your legs stretched down on the floor, and separate your legs a bit. Reach your arms above you on the floor so that you're making a big X with your body.

Movement: Reach your right arm as far away from you as you can, leaving it on the floor. Notice that the right side of your waist has to release and get longer to allow this to happen. Then relax and let your arm slowly slide back to where it started. Then reach your left arm as far away from you as you can. Notice that the left side of your waist has to release and get longer, while the right side of your waist gets shorter and tighter. Then relax and let your arm slowly slide back to where it started.

Now reach your right leg as far away from you as you can, leaving it on the floor. Notice that the right side of your waist releases and gets longer, while the left side of your waist gets shorter and tighter. Relax and slowly let your right leg slide back to where you started. Now reach your left leg as far away from you as you can. Notice that the left side of your waist releases and gets longer, while the right side of your waist gets shorter and tighter. Relax and let your left leg come back to where you started.

Repeat this pattern several times, reaching your right arm, left arm, right leg, then left leg away from the center of your body. Notice that this exercise isn't about your arms and legs; it's about the movement of the core of your body. Notice your spine gently bending from side to side, and the sides of your waist alternately getting shorter and longer.

ANATOMY OF THE BIG X

The Big X works with the muscles that laterally flex the spine and laterally tilt the pelvis:

- Internal and external obliques
- Quadratus lumborum
- Latissimus dorsi
- Iliopsoas
- Erector spinae group
- Intertransversarii

CONDITIONS HELPED BY THE BIG X

The Big X addresses the following conditions by releasing involuntary muscle contraction in the muscles that laterally flex the spine and laterally tilt the pelvis:

- Idiopathic scoliosis
- Functional leg length discrepancy
- Sciatica
- Back tightness and pain
- Disc problems
- Shoulder tightness and pain
- Frozen shoulder
- Bursitis in the shoulder or hip
- Neck tightness and pain
- Hip, knee, and ankle pain

HOW TO TEACH THE BIG X

Get the student in their starting position. Instruct the student to lie on their back with their legs stretched down on the floor, and to separate their legs a bit. Tell them to reach their arms above them on the floor so that they're making a big X with their body.

Invite the student to close their eyes. Closing their eyes removes all the visual information that their brain would otherwise have to process. Keeping the eyes closed allows the student to focus completely on their internal sensations.

Movement: Instruct your student to reach their right arm as far away from them as they can, keeping it on the floor. Ask your student to notice if they can feel the right side of their waist releasing and getting longer, and the left side of their waist contracting. Then tell them to gently relax, and allow their right arm to slide back to where it started.

Then instruct your student to reach their left arm as far away from them as they can, keeping it on the floor. Ask your student to notice if they can feel the left side of their waist releasing and getting longer, and the right side of their waist contracting. Then tell them to gently relax, and allow their left arm to slide back to where it started.

Then instruct your student to reach their right leg as far away from them as they can, leaving it on the floor. Ask your student to notice if they can feel the right side of their waist getting longer, and the left side of their waist contracting. Then tell them to gently relax, and allow their right leg to slide back to where it started.

Then instruct your student to reach their left leg as far away from them as they can, leaving it on the floor. Ask your student to notice if they can feel the left side of their waist getting longer, and the right side of their waist contracting. Then tell them to gently relax, and allow their left leg to slide back to where it started.

Talk your student through this pattern a few more times: right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg. Ask them to notice the gentle side-to-side bending of their spine, and the alternate lengthening and shortening of the sides of their waist. Ask them to notice how this movement isn't about their arms and legs, but instead about the movement of the core of their body.

When your student is comfortable with the pattern, ask them to continue on for another minute or two without your guidance.

Notes:

There is no need to instruct a breathing pattern in this exercise. Simply tell your student to breathe as needed and not hold their breath.

Common mistakes:

Make sure your student is moving the core of their body as fully as possible, and that their arms and legs are just along for the ride. The reaching of their arms and legs is just an extension of the lengthening that's happening in the core of their body.

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The following is an example of how I teach the Big X:

Come down to the floor, and lie down on your back. Extend your legs straight down on the floor, and separate them a bit so that they're a little wider than your hips. Then, extend your arms on the floor above your head and let them be wider than your shoulders. You should be making a big X with your body.

First, reach your right arm as far away from you as you can, leaving it on the floor. Notice that the right side of your waist has to release and get longer to allow this to happen. Then relax and let your arm gently slide back to where it started.

Now, reach your left arm as far away from you as you can. Notice that the left side of your waist has to release and get longer, while the right side of your waist gets shorter and tighter. Then relax and let your arm gently slide back to where it started.

Now you'll do that same movement with your legs. Reach your right leg as far away from you as you can, leaving it on the floor. Notice that the right side of your waist releases and gets longer, while the left side of your waist gets shorter and tighter. Relax and gently let your right leg slide back to where you started.

Now slide your left leg as far away from you as you can. Notice that the left side of your waist releases and gets longer, while the right side of your waist gets shorter and tighter. Relax and let your left leg come back to where you started.

Now I'll talk you through the full movement, and we'll continue in that same pattern: right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg. Once you get going it will feel natural. You'll notice that this movement really isn't about your arms and legs, but it's about the core of your body gently bending from side to side, allowing your arms and legs to extend.

Start by reaching your right arm long and allowing the right side of your waist to get long. Then relax... and reach your left arm away from you, letting your left side get long. Then relax... and reach your right leg away from you, letting your right side get long. Then relax... and reach your left leg away from you, letting your left side get long.

Keep going like this for another minute or two: right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg. Notice how this is about the movement in the core of your body, and your arms and legs are just along for the ride.

When you're done, just relax. Often people will tend to arch their back a bit in this movement, so to release that arching you can bring your knees into your chest and hold them there with your hands. Be as relaxed as possible here, and just take a few deep breaths down into your lower belly.

After you've taken a few deep breaths, gently let your feet come back down to the floor one at a time. Rest here in your neutral position, with your knees pointed toward the ceiling and your feet hip width distance apart, or feel free to stretch your legs down straight on the floor.