



## Shin Release

The Shin Release allows you to release the muscles that dorsiflex the ankle. The exercise is practiced lying on the back in the neutral starting position, and flexing and then slowly releasing the ankles. This exercise helps to relieve tightness and pain in the shins and ankles, and shin splints.

### EXERCISE DESCRIPTION

**Starting Position:** Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet on the floor a comfortable hip width distance apart, and your arms lying by your sides.

**Movement:** Very slowly flex your ankles, lifting the balls of your feet off the floor and leaving your heels on the floor. Feel your shin muscles gently contracting. Then very slowly and gently release them, lowering your feet down to the count of 16.

If it's comfortable for you, slide your feet a little farther away from you, and do the movement again.

### ANATOMY OF THE SHIN RELEASE

The Shin Release releases the following muscles that dorsiflex the ankle:

- Tibialis anterior
- Extensor digitorum longus
- Extensor hallucis longus

### CONDITIONS HELPED BY THE SHIN RELEASE

The Shin Release helps to alleviate the following conditions:

- Tightness and pain in the shins
- Tightness and pain in the ankles
- Shin splints

## HOW TO TEACH THE SHIN RELEASE

**Get the student in their starting position.** Instruct your student to lie down on their back in their neutral starting position, with their knees bent and feet on the floor, a comfortable hip width distance apart. They can rest their arms on the floor by their sides.

**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.

**Teach the exercise.** Instruct your student to slowly flex their ankles, lifting the balls of their feet off the floor and leaving their heels on the floor. Cue them to notice the muscles in their shins and front of their ankles contracting. Then, count to 16 as they release to ensure that they release slowly enough to get the benefit of the movement.

If it is comfortable for your student, instruct them to slide their feet a little farther away from them, and then talk them through the movement again. This extended position allows the student to release the muscles farther.

### Notes:

Many people don't notice tension in the muscles that dorsiflex their ankles. However, tension in these muscles often goes along with tightness in muscles that plantar flex the ankle. The Shin Release is a very helpful exercise that can be taught in conjunction with the Standing Calf Release or the Foot Exercises. It is especially important for athletes such as runners, soccer players, basketball players, football players, and anyone who spends a lot of time standing and walking.

### Common mistakes:

The only common mistake you are likely to see is students releasing too quickly. Teach your student to count to 16 as they release in order to get the benefit of the movement.

**The following is an example of how I teach the Shin Release:**

Lie down on your back on your carpet or exercise mat. Come into your neutral starting position, with your knees bent and feet on the floor, a comfortable hip width distance apart. Get comfortable here, so that you feel like you're using little to no effort to stay in this position.

Very slowly flex your ankles, lifting the balls of your feet off the floor and leaving your heels on the floor. Feel your shin muscles gently contracting. Then very slowly and gently release them to the count of 16:

One...two...three...four...five...six...seven...eight...nine...ten...eleven...twelve...thirteen...fourteen...fifteen...sixteen.

Now, if it's comfortable for you, slide your feet a little farther away from you, and do this movement again.

Very slowly flex your ankles, lifting the balls of your feet off the floor and leaving your heels on the floor. Feel your shin muscles gently contracting. Then very slowly and gently release them to the count of 16:

One...two...three...four...five...six...seven...eight...nine...ten...eleven...twelve...thirteen...fourteen...fifteen...sixteen.

When you're done, slide your feet down and stretch out your legs, and relax.