

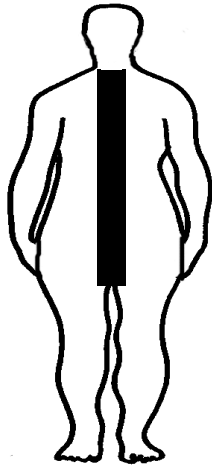
# Noodle notes

Foam pool noodles are very useful in helping to release tense muscles. When you place them under your body in strategic places and lie on them, they massage the muscles resting on them.

Get a noodle that doesn't feel too hard. The more tense your muscles are, the harder the noodle feels. It will feel softer, however, as you get used to it.

Here are a few ways to use them. They are especially nice to do as breaks from practicing.

Play around and make up your own!



## 1. The spinal stretch

Lie on the floor, with the noodle under your spine. Make sure it is as long as from your tailbone to your skull.

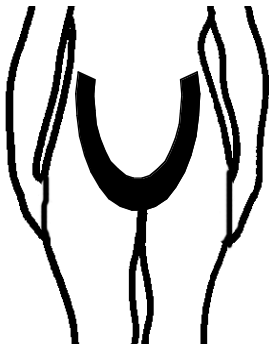
As you lower yourself down, gently lengthen your spine so your back is as long as is comfortable.

Put your knees up, feet on floor, and put a book under the top of the noodle to support your head slightly.

Rest and relax for about 5 minutes, allowing your body to keep sinking into the noodle.

Without getting up, pull the noodle out and remain lying on the floor, feeling the new length of your spine and freedom in your back muscles.

Then stand and see if you can feel it in a balanced upright position.



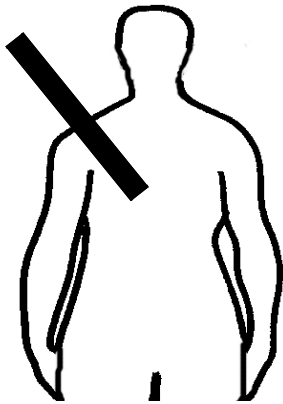
## 2. Sacrum sling

Your sacrum - the lowest part of your spine - is suspended between the pelvic bones. Often there is tension through that place. Bend the noodle into a U-shape and put it under your pelvis, so the sacrum is in the middle of the U.

Rest and relax for a while, with knees bent and feet on floor.

You can help your lower back release by pressing down with your feet very gently.

Again, without getting up, take out the noodle and feel the width throughout your lower back and hips.



## 3. Shoulder blade scoop

Often Alexander Technique teachers will scoop under your shoulder blades and help create width across the back.

Here is a way to do it yourself.

Put the noodle diagonally under your shoulder blade, putting one end of it just under the tip of the blade (or wherever you have that persistent muscle knot).

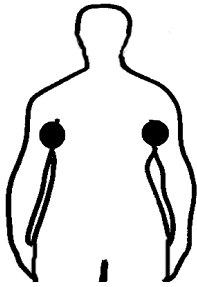
Rest and relax on it for a few minutes, gently moving your arm in full range of motion.

With your other hand, reach over and pull the noodle out about 2 in., Repeat, pulling out an inch or two every minute or so. Even when the noodle is almost out, stay resting on it for as long as you can.

Now pull out the noodle completely and see how this shoulder feels compared to the other one.

Repeat on the other side so you'll be balanced!

## Noodle notes, cont.



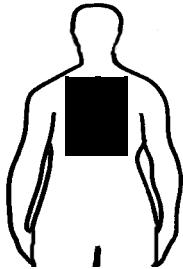
### 4. Arm space

Often we pull in at the upper arm while playing. This can cause muscles to be tight and put pressure on nerves.

Take two short pieces of noodle and put them in your armpits. Stand or sit and release the muscles around them. This helps to increase the space and width in this area.

Take them out and play your instrument, keeping that space under the arms.

(If the noodles are too fat for you, cut them in half.)



### 5. Butterfly back

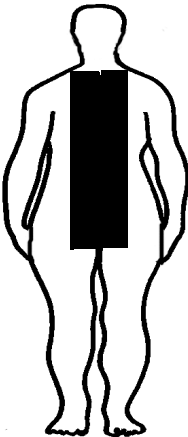
Many of us tense up between the shoulder blades. This trick helps open up that space.

Take a piece of noodle about 1 foot long, and cut it in half lengthwise. Tape one side of it together with duct tape, like a hinge.

Put it behind your shoulder blades, flat side against the floor.

Lie on it and relax for a few minutes, enjoying the space it creates.

Then take it out and keep feeling the width of your upper back.



### 6. Angel of the spine

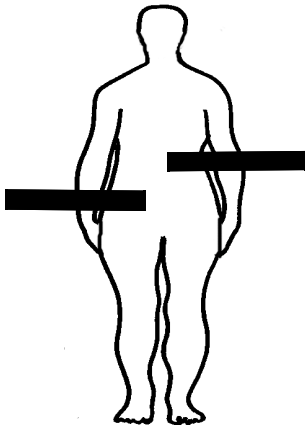
If using a whole noodle for the Spinal stretch is too big for you, try this version.

Take a long noodle and cut it in half lengthwise. Attach duct tape to one side, like a hinge (like Butterfly back)

Open it out like wings and lie on it so your spine runs in the groove, knees up and feet on floor.

Rest and relax as in No. 1, so you feel the noodle supporting your spine.

Take it out and feel the length of your spine against the floor.



### 7. Sideswipe (similar to shoulder blade scoop)

Sometimes we feel cramped in the lower back from standing or sitting wrong. To relieve the crunch, try this swipe.

Lie on floor with knees up. Put a noodle under the place in your back where it feels most tense.

After resting a minute or two, sinking into the noodle, pull it out about an inch.

Keep pulling it out gradually, feeling the area release as you do.

When you go back to sitting or standing, imagine keeping the area open like the back of a hospital gown!