

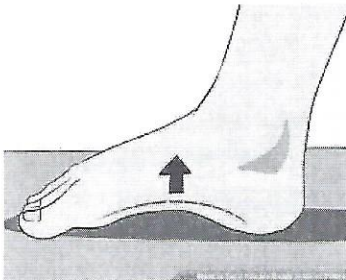
Home Stretching Resources / **Intrinsic Foot Exercises**

Here are some examples of foot intrinsic strengthening exercises. They can be done either in sitting or standing, one foot at a time, or both together. At first, the movement may seem impossible, but if you practice for a few minutes a day, you will start to see the toes working with better control.



1) **“Toe Swapping”** – Start with your foot flat on the floor with equal pressure on your heel, the base of the big toe, and the base of the little toe. Raise up the big toe while keeping the other 4 toes flat and pressed into the floor. After holding a few seconds, try the opposite. Flatten the big toe down into the floor and try to lift up the 4 small toes. Try not to let your whole leg roll back and forth as you swap back and forth between the big toe and the 4 small toes. You can start by using your hands to hold the toes in place to help your body learn how to isolate the toe movement.

2) **“Playing the Piano”** – Start with your foot and all the toes flat with equal weight on the inside and outside of the foot. Raise the big toe up by itself as in the previous exercise. Keeping the big toe up, raise up the second toe to join it. Then add the third toe, the fourth, and the pinky. Try to make each toe come up separately. Once all the toes are up off the floor, start putting them back down one at a time starting with the little toe. Keep rippling them up, and then down, like someone playing scales on a piano.



3) **“Doming”** – Start again with the foot flat on the floor. Try and press the underneath side of the small knuckles of the toes down into the floor. This should make the main knuckles closest to the foot raise up like a dome. The toes need to stay long and straight. When the toes curl under, it's the extrinsic muscles working, not the intrinsic.



4) **“Scrunching a Towel”** -A hand towel is a convenient tool for strengthening the small muscles of the feet. Sit near the edge of chair with your feet planted on a smooth floor surface. Lay a towel on the floor in front of your feet, spreading it out completely. Press your right heel into the floor and use the toes of your right foot to drag the towel closer to your body. Scrunch your toes to take hold of the towel, draw the towel toward you, and then release your grip. Repeat the scrunch-release sequence 10 times, relax the foot briefly, and then repeat the exercise for a total of three sets.

Videos: [Video for Intrinsic foot exercises dr. blake▶ 2:10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa3k5b9kNAM)  
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