FREE QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

10 Essential Massage Techniques Every Therapist Must Master

A practical cheat sheet covering effleurage, deep tissue massage, myofascial release, trigger point therapy, sports massage techniques, and more — built for massage therapists, physiotherapists, osteopaths, chiropractors, and manual therapy students.

Deep Tissue Massage **Myofascial Release** **Trigger Point Therapy** **Sports Massage Techniques** **Manual Lymphatic Drainage**

- ✓ Effleurage
- ✓ Petrissage
- ✓ Friction
- ✓ Tapotement
- ✓ Deep Tissue Massage
- ✓ Myofascial Release
- ✓ Trigger Point Therapy
- ✓ Manual Lymphatic Drainage
- ✓ Compression Techniques
- ✓ Fascial Stretching

INTRODUCTION

Why These 10 Techniques Matter

Effleurage, petrissage, friction, tapotement, deep tissue massage, myofascial release, trigger point therapy, manual lymphatic drainage, compression, and fascial stretching form the foundation of massage therapy, sports massage, and orthopedic manual therapy. Mastering when — not just how — to use each one is what separates a good therapist from a great one. This guide gives you a fast, printable reference for clinical practice. For full step-by-step demonstrations, watch the companion video tutorial linked at the end of this guide.

CONTENTS

01 Effleurage — Page 3

02 Petrissage — Page 3

03 Friction — Page 3

04 Tapotement (Percussion) — Page 4

05 Deep Tissue Massage — Page 4

06 Myofascial Release — Page 4

07 Trigger Point Therapy — Page 5

08 Manual Lymphatic Drainage — Page 5

09 Compression Techniques — Page 5

10 Fascial Stretching & Long-Lever Techniques — Page 5

Watch the Full Hands-On Tutorial

All 10 techniques demonstrated step-by-step, with body mechanics, common mistakes, and clinical tips — free on YouTube.

▶ **Watch: 10 Massage Techniques Every Therapist Must Master**

FOUNDATIONAL TECHNIQUES

Warming, Kneading & Precision Work

The base techniques every session starts with — used for assessment, tissue warming, and general mobilization.

01 Effleurage

Long, gliding strokes used at the start and end of a massage session to warm tissue, spread lubricant, and assess tone before deeper work begins.

Best for: Warm-up & assessment **Pressure: Light–Medium**

Clinical tip: Use effleurage to gauge tissue temperature and guarding before progressing to deeper techniques — skipping this step is one of the most common mistakes new therapists make.

02 Petrissage

Kneading, lifting, and rolling movements that mobilize deeper muscle layers and improve circulation — a core technique in massage therapy and rehabilitation.

Best for: Muscle mobilization **Pressure: Medium**

Clinical tip: Keep wrists neutral and use body weight — not finger strength — to protect your joints during repeated sessions.

03 Friction

Small, precise, deep movements applied across or along muscle fibers to break down adhesions and target localized soft tissue restrictions.

Best for: Adhesions & scar tissue **Pressure: Medium–Deep**

Clinical tip: Always confirm patient tolerance before increasing pressure — friction is easy to overapply.

DEEPER WORK & ASSESSMENT

Percussion, Deep Tissue & Myofascial Techniques

Techniques used once tissue is warmed and assessed — this is where most treatment-focused, results-driven work happens.

04 Tapotement (Percussion)

Rhythmic tapping, cupping, or hacking movements used to stimulate circulation and muscle tone, often applied near the end of a session.

Best for: Stimulation & toning **Pressure: Light–Medium**

Clinical tip: Avoid over bony landmarks and areas of acute inflammation.

05 Deep Tissue Massage

Slow, sustained pressure applied to deeper muscle layers and fascia to release chronic tension — one of the most searched massage techniques among clients and therapists alike.

Best for: Chronic tension **Pressure: Deep**

Clinical tip: Work with — not against — the client's breathing to ease guarding and reduce discomfort at depth.

06 Myofascial Release

Slow, sustained pressure into the fascia to release restrictions and restore mobility — a foundation of orthopedic manual therapy and soft tissue mobilization.

Best for: Fascial restriction **Pressure: Light–Medium, sustained**

Clinical tip: Hold each point for 60–90+ seconds — the release happens slowly, not with force.

SPECIALIZED TECHNIQUES

Trigger Points, Lymphatic Drainage & Fascial Stretching

Targeted techniques for pain points, swelling, and long-lever mobility — commonly used in sports massage and rehabilitation settings.

07 Trigger Point Therapy

Sustained, targeted pressure on hyperirritable points within muscle tissue to reduce referred pain and restore normal function.

Best for: Referred pain **Pressure: Medium–Deep, sustained**

Clinical tip: Hold pressure until you feel the tissue "release" under your fingers — usually 20–30 seconds.

08 Manual Lymphatic Drainage

Very light, rhythmic strokes that follow the direction of lymphatic flow to reduce swelling and support the immune and circulatory systems.

Best for: Swelling & post-op recovery **Pressure: Very light**

Clinical tip: Pressure should be light enough to just move the skin — too much pressure collapses lymphatic vessels.

09 Compression Techniques

Rhythmic pressing movements, often using a flat hand or forearm, used to warm tissue and prepare muscle groups for deeper work — a sports massage staple.

Best for: Pre-event warm-up **Pressure: Medium**

Clinical tip: Use your body weight through a braced arm to avoid fatiguing your hands during longer sessions.

10 Fascial Stretching & Long-Lever Techniques

Whole-limb stretches and long-lever mobilizations that address fascial lines across multiple joints — useful for restoring functional movement patterns.

Best for: Functional mobility **Pressure: Variable**

Clinical tip: Move slowly through the full available range — speed reduces the fascial response you're aiming for.

KEEP LEARNING

Go Deeper With the Full Video & Courses

This guide is a quick-reference companion. For full demonstrations, body mechanics coaching, and common mistakes to avoid for each technique, watch the complete tutorial.

▶ 10 Massage Techniques Every Therapist Must Master

The complete 40-minute hands-on tutorial covering all 10 techniques in this guide — free on YouTube.

Watch the full video →

MORE FROM PHYSIO ENERGY

- 🎓 Professional online courses for therapists — **physioenergy.com/physio-courses**
- 📌 Pinterest — es.pinterest.com/PhysioEnergy
- 📸 Instagram — instagram.com/physioenergy
- 🎵 TikTok — tiktok.com/@physioenergytiktok
- 💼 LinkedIn — linkedin.com/company/physio-energy

Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider. Use of this content is at your own risk. © Physio Energy. Keywords: massage techniques, deep tissue massage, sports massage techniques, myofascial release, trigger point therapy, manual lymphatic drainage, effleurage, petrissage, soft tissue mobilization, manual therapy.