

# Five Simple Golf Exercises to Improve Your Game

By Body Balance for Performance

Modern golfers should be fully aware that their most important piece of golf equipment is their *body*. A golf-specific and customized fitness-training program to address physical performance factors is really the “missing ingredient” that golfers have been looking for to help safely and efficiently achieve their ideal golf swing and optimal performance goals. The *structure* of the body governs its *function*. Therefore, those who want to function as a golfer must be structured as a golfer.

The following five exercises are examples of simple, golf-specific exercises that can be performed at home to improve your physical structure and, therefore, improve your swing potential. Before attempting to perform these or any other exercises, however, please be sure to consult with your physician and golf-specific fitness expert. Also, if you should notice any discomfort during or after performing these exercises, consult your physician immediately before continuing.

## Exercise 1: The Recumbent Chest and Spine Stretch

The “Recumbent Chest and Spine Stretch” is an excellent flexibility and posture improvement exercise for golfers. This exercise specifically releases the tightness in your chest, in the front of your shoulders and in your lower back. After you have mastered this exercise, you will have a much better posture potential at address that will enable a better turn.

Perform this flexibility exercise as follows:

- Lie on a flat, firm surface with your hips and knees bent to a 90 degree angle while comfortably resting your legs on a chair, couch or bed. Depending upon the degree of tightness in your chest, spine and shoulders, you may need to begin this exercise on a softer surface (exercise mat, blankets on the floor or on your bed) as well as placing a small pillow or towel roll under your head and neck to comfortably support your head and neck in a neutral position. You may also need to place a small towel roll under the small of your back to support the arch of your lower back.
- Next, bend your elbows to approximately 90 degrees and position your arms approximately 60-80 degrees away from the sides of your body so that you begin to feel a comfortable stretch in the front of your chest and shoulders. If you feel any uncomfortable pinching pain in your shoulder joints, try elevating your arms and rest them on a stack of towels or small pillow so that your elbows are positioned relatively higher from the floor than your shoulders.
- Once properly positioned, relax into this comfortable stretch position for at least 3-5 *minutes* or until you experience a *complete* release of the tightness in your chest, front of your shoulders and in your low back. The eventual result that you are looking to

gain is a completely flat back, spine and shoulders to the floor. Repeat this exercise *daily for 5-10 days* until you can perform the exercise easily feeling no lingering tightness in your body while performing the exercise.

- Then, you may want to try increasing the degree of stretch in your body by removing any support or padding under your body and/or arms --- or even adding a small towel roll under the middle portion of your spine (shoulder blade level) in a position horizontal to the direction of your spine. Remember to *always* keep the degree of stretch comfortable and support your head, neck, spine and arms so you are not putting excessive stress on those structures while you are performing this exercise.

## **Exercise 2: The Recumbent Abdominal and Shoulder Blade Squeeze**

The Recumbent Abdominal and Shoulder Blade Squeeze exercise is designed to help *reeducate* your golf posture and begin *rebuilding* two key areas of muscle strength necessary for great posture at address namely your lower abdominals and your shoulder blade muscles.

Perform this *reeducation* and *rebuilding* exercise as follows:

- Assume the same starting position as for Exercise 1: The Recumbent Chest and Spine Stretch.
- Then, contract the muscles of your lower abdominal, middle and lower shoulder blade regions so that you can feel the entire length of your spine, neck and shoulders flattening firmly into the floor. If you are performing this exercise properly, you should feel a comfortable degree of muscle contraction enabling your spine, neck and shoulders to be pressed firmly into the floor while you are able to maintain a normal, relaxed breathing pattern.
- Hold this contraction for *3-5 breaths*, relax and then repeat the exercise. Perform this exercise *at least once*, every other day for the next *2-3 weeks* starting with *one set of 10 repetitions* and building up gradually to *one set of 50 repetitions* as needed.
- Later, you can advance the difficulty of this exercise by first straightening one leg as you perform the exercise and then switch legs.
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## **Exercise 3: Supine Hip Rotation Stretch**

The Supine Hip Rotation Stretch is a very safe and effective exercise to help you reduce your hip rotation tightness and, therefore, improve your ability to make a full turn around your hips during the full golf swing.

Perform this flexibility exercise as follows:

- Begin by lying on your back close to a wall and place both feet on the wall so your hips and knees are bent approximately 90 degrees..
- Next, cross your right foot over the left knee and rest both hands on the top of your right knee.
- Then, apply gentle pressure with your hands on your right knee in a direction that is down and away from your right shoulder until you feel a light, comfortable stretch in the outer portion of your right hip and/or in the groin.

- Hold this light, comfortable stretch for approximately *3-5 minutes* or until you feel a complete softening release of the original stretch feeling in your right hip.
- After the stretch is complete, slowly release the downward pressure from your hand on your right knee and repeat the stretch with your left hip.
- Practice this *releasing* exercise at least *once each day* for the next *2-3 weeks* until you can stretch equally well in both hips. However, if you have experienced one hip to be tighter than the other during your swing then initially spend more time stretching the tighter hip. Your ultimate goal is *balanced rotation* for both hips. Only by achieving complete and balanced hip rotation flexibility will you accomplish a full backswing and follow-through with each and every swing.
- Once balanced, you may advance this stretch by simply moving your body closer to the wall during your starting position for this exercise. This will enable your hips and knees to be bent at a starting angle greater than 90 degrees and enable a greater degree of stretch in your hips during the exercise.

#### **Exercise 4: Supine Trunk Rotation Stretch**

The Supine Trunk Rotation Stretch is a very good stretching exercise to help improve your ability to execute a complete, stress-free backswing and follow-through. If you have noticed that you are having difficulty turning in one or both directions of rotation, then this exercise can help you gain the needed flexibility in the proper region of your spine to then enable a better turn.

Perform this *releasing* exercise as follows:

- Begin by lying on your back with your hips and knees bent so that your feet are flat on the floor and your arms are rested comfortably away from your sides in the double “tray position”.
- Next, begin the stretch by gently squeezing your shoulder blades and flattening your neck to the floor while you slowly and gently rotate your legs to the *left*.
- Continue to slowly twist your body keeping your right shoulder blade and forearm flat to the floor until you begin to feel a comfortable feeling of stretch in your spine and possibly in your right hip and the front of your right shoulder. Hold this stretch position for *3-5 minutes* or until you feel a *complete* release of the gentle stretch feeling in your body. You may enhance the stretch in this position by bringing your left hand down from the “tray position” and gently press down on the top of your right thigh.
- When the stretch is complete, slowly return to the neutral, starting position and attempt to stretch with your legs now rotating to the *right*.
- Practice this *releasing* exercise at least *once each day* for the next *2-3 weeks* until you can stretch equally well in both directions. However, if you evaluated your spine to be more stiff or limited in rotation when turning to your right, then initially spend more time stretching with your legs rotated to the *left*. Likewise, if you evaluated your trunk rotation flexibility to more limited when turning to your left, then initially practice this exercise with your legs rotated to your *right*. Nevertheless, your ultimate goal, remember, is *balanced* rotation in both directions.

### **Exercise 5: Alternate Arm and Leg Lift**

The last exercise is called the “Alternate Arm and Leg Lift”. The benefit of this exercise is to improve your total body balance and control while you also strengthen your shoulder blade, hip and back muscles so you can achieve and maintain proper posture and control during the entire golf swing. Without great posture and control during your full swing it is difficult to achieve enough club head speed and proper swing path for the added distance you are looking for.

To begin this exercise, get on your hands and knees. Then, keep your neck long, flatten your lower back by contracting your lower abdominal muscles and simultaneously lift both your right arm and your left leg. Hold this balanced position for *3-5 breaths*. Next slowly lower your arm and leg and repeat with the opposite arm and leg. Repeat this exercise for *2 sets of 8-12 repetitions* or until you feel a comfortable burn in your shoulder blade, hip and leg muscles.

*For more information about Body Balance for Performance<sup>®</sup>, contact David Ostrow at 610.594.0873 or [dostrow@netcarrier.com](mailto:dostrow@netcarrier.com). Body Balance is the complete golf, health, and fitness training program.*