

Chapter 3 - FLEXIBILITY FOR GOLF

Flexibility is important in the golf swing to allow the golfer to achieve the correct technical positions to improve performance as well as reduce the risk of injury. Adequate flexibility will also allow the golfer to sequence their swing correctly to improve consistency and power.

The following basic stretches address the main muscles that may become tight and restrict the golfers ability to adopt correct swing positions.

Hamstrings

Tightness in the hamstrings may restrict the ability to adopt correct address position, causing the pelvis to tilt under and cause rounding of the lower back.

To stretch the hamstrings, the golfer lay on their back, grasps behind the knee and pull towards the chest, maintaining some flex in the knee at all times.



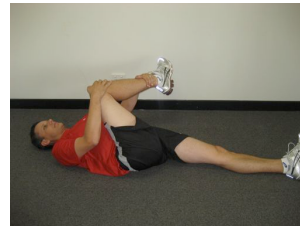
Alternatively, they can stretch the hamstrings in standing by placing one foot on a bench or chair, keeping some bend in the knee. Ensure that they bend forward at the hips, keeping their back straight and chest up.



Gluteals

The gluteal muscles lie in the back of the hips. Tightness through these may restrict rotation of the hips, as well as placing increased stress through the lower back.

To stretch the gluteals, the golfer lays on their back and pulls their knee towards the opposite shoulder. Holding this position they twist the leg around to get the stretch



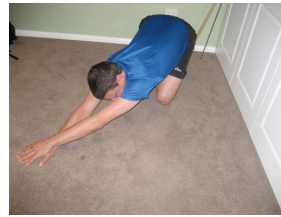
Alternatively, they can stretch their gluteals against a wall. Laying on their back near a wall, the golfer places one foot on the wall with their hip and knee at 90 degrees, they then place the other foot across the bent knee and push the knee towards the wall.



Lateral Trunk Muscles

The lateral trunk muscles, in particular latissimus dorsi, are important to golfers as these muscles are stretched during rotation. Tightness in these muscles will greatly reduce the ability to rotate, especially in the backswing.

To stretch these muscles, the golfer starts on their knees with their arms stretched above their head. Reaching 1 hand over the other, the golfer rocks their hips back to their heels. The golfer should feel a stretch down their side.



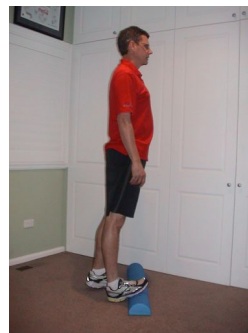
They can alternatively stretch the lateral trunk muscles by bending forward and grasping a door frame, then rotating their body until they feel a stretch.



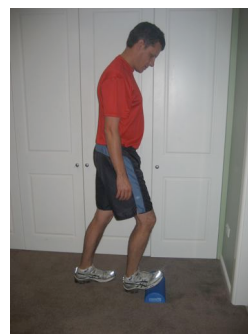
Calf Muscles

It is important to maintain adequate length in the calf muscles, as any tightness here will limit the flexibility in the ankle which may make it difficult to maintain posture through the swing. Tightness in the calf muscles can also be a major factor in the development of knee, hip and even low back pain.

The first calf stretch focuses on the largest calf muscle, the gastrocnemius. This muscle is stretched with the knee straight. The golfer stands with the ball of one foot resting on a small step or raise. The golfer leans forward at the hips until they feel a stretch in the calf.



The other muscle in this group that needs to be stretched is the smaller soleus. This muscle is stretched with the knee bent. Starting in the same position as previous, the golfer bends the knee until they feel a stretch lower down near the Achilles.

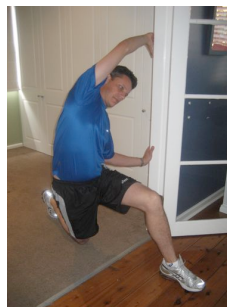


Hip Flexors and Quads

It is important to maintain flexibility in the quads and hip flexors to allow correct posture of the hips and pelvis, as well as to help facilitate rotation of the spine and hips during the swing. Tightness of these muscle groups can predispose the golfer to low back and even hip problems.

To stretch these muscles, the golfer adopts a lunge position and tucks their hips under to feel a stretch through the front of the hip and thigh. The golfer can then increase the stretch by leaning away from the back leg with their hand over their head.

This is a very efficient stretch as it also stretches the lateral trunk muscles.



This stretch can be further enhanced by first rotating the body away from the back leg, and then bending the trunk to the side.



Forearm Muscles

The muscles of the forearm act on the wrist joint and attach just above the elbow. When these muscles are injured, often through overuse, problems such as Golfer's Elbow and Tennis Elbow may develop. These conditions can be very painful. The following stretches may help prevent these problems developing.

To stretch the wrist flexors, the golfer holds their arm straight out in front with the palm facing up. Using the other hand, the golfer pulls the hand down until they feel a stretch.



To stretch the wrist extensors, the golfer holds their arm straight out in front with the palm facing down and uses the other hand to pull the hand down until they feel a stretch.

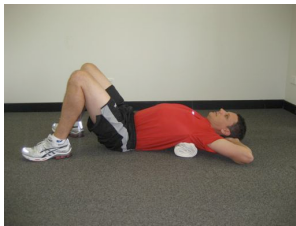


Upper Back and Chest

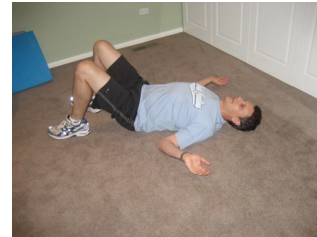
It is very important to maintain flexibility in the upper back and chest as this allows the golfer to adopt correct posture at address and rotate efficiently through their swing. When there is tightness of the upper back and chest, it not only makes it difficult to swing the club effectively, but it also greatly increases the risk of neck, shoulder or low back pain. Many common postures that people adopt away from golf, such as at the computer or in the car, will contribute to any problems seen here.

There are two ways to improve mobility in the upper back as well as stretch out the chest.

The first way is to lay over a rolled up towel, with the towel positioned across the upper back at the level of the shoulder blades. In this position, placing the hands behind the head will increase the stretch.



The second way is to place the towel along the spine with the elbows bent to 90 degrees and arms positioned slightly out to the side. This will increase the stretch through the chest muscles.



The above stretches address static flexibility, that is the length of muscle groups when held in a constant position. The golfer also needs to improve dynamic flexibility, that is their ability to move through available range of motion. This not only involves basic flexibility, but muscle control to utilize the available range of motion.

The following basic drills will help to improve dynamic flexibility for golf.

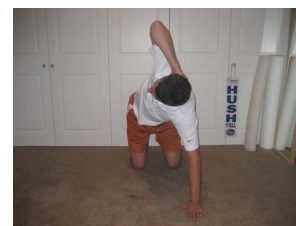
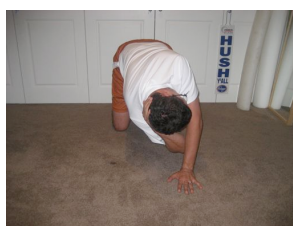
Bow and Arrow Stretch

Laying on their side with hips and knees bent to 90 degrees and arms stretched out in front, the golfer reaches across their chest with their top hand to grab their shoulder, then pulls their shoulder down to the ground holds for several seconds. Keeping their knees and hips still at all times, they continue to move back and forth in a smooth motion for 8 - 10 repetitions



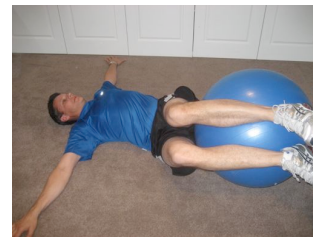
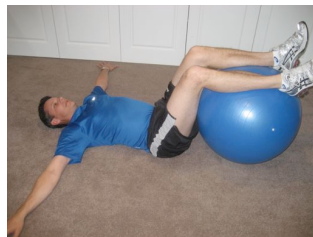
Upper Back Rotation in 4 Point Kneeling

Starting on all 4s, the golfer places 1 hand behind their head. Keeping the hand in place, they rotate their elbow under their body as far as they can, then rotate back the other way and attempt to look up at the ceiling. The golfer continues to repeat this motion in a smooth manner for 10 - 15 repetitions



Lower Body Swiss Ball Rotation

Laying on their back with legs resting on a swiss ball with arms out to the side, the golfer rotates their legs side-to-side. The golfer must maintain control and keep their shoulders down at all times. The golfer should repeat this for 15 - 20 repetitions



Lunging Upper Body Rotation

Starting in a lunge position and holding a club overhead, the golfer maintains an upright posture as they rotate side-to-side. They should continue for 15 - 20 repetitions each way

