

# LEARN TO PLAY SIMPLY GREAT GOLF!

## Chapter 3: Stretching and Warm-Up Exercises for Making Your Best Golf Swings

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This chapter of Learn to Play Simply Great Golf will teach you key exercises used by the best golfers in preparation to play their best.

I am a big believer in the importance of the 4 P's Principle: Preparation Prevents Poor Performance! Most golfers need to spend a minimum of 10 minutes preparing their bodies to make their best golf swings.

The first step is to stretch your muscles. There are two forms of stretching: 1) Flexibility Stretching and 2) Pre-Swing Stretching.

**The Flexibility Stretching Exercises Routine** is designed to increase and maintain your range of motion as well as alleviate sore muscles. I am standing for the most part of my work day which tends to make my back muscles tense and sore at times. I do a complete set of these exercises daily which has proven to make my back feel better throughout the day.

These exercises are especially important for maintaining your golf swing coordination and club speed for distance once you become a senior golfer. Your Flexibility Stretching Exercises should be held for 10 seconds (with the exception of the hamstring stretch which should be held for 30 seconds).

**The Pre-Swing Stretching Exercises Routine** is designed to stretch your muscles just before a full swing practice session or round of golf. Your Pre-Swing Stretching Exercises should be held for only 3 seconds so that the muscles do not become too elongated – a detriment to making good golf swings.

### **Here is a list of the best golf-specific stretching exercises:**

(Be careful when performing any exercises to avoid injury)

**#1 “Reach for the Sky”** – Make your body upright again! This is the #1 stretch for golfers. We tend to slouch as the day goes on so this is a great exercise to do periodically throughout the day. Link your fingers together and reach up with palms facing upward.

**#2 “Elbows Back”** – Progressing from exercise #1, bring your hands down behind your head and bring your elbows back. This is a great exercise to stretch the trapezes muscles located at the top of your upper back and lower neck. They become tense and sore from sitting at a desk for long periods of time.

**#3 “Chest Out”** – With your fingers linked together and hands behind your lower back, bring your hands up, chest out and shoulders back.

**#4 “Shoulder Stretch”** – Bring your left arm up to horizontal position and place your right hand under your left wrist. Gently, bring your left arm across your body. Switch arms and repeat the exercise for the right shoulder stretch.

**#5 “Neck Stretch”** – Gently, push your chin to the left. Repeat to the right.

**#6 “Torso Twist”** – Stand up straight with your feet shoulder width and your hands just in front of your chest. Smoothly, twist or rotate your upper body right to left and allow your hips, legs and feet to move in response to your full upper body rotation.

**#7 “Hamstring Stretch”** – Set your right foot two feet back from your left foot with your feet pointing straight ahead. Keep your legs straight and tip your upper body forward with your hands on your knee and feel the muscles stretch in the back of your upper left leg for 30 seconds. These hamstring muscles tighten throughout the day. Physical trainers constantly work with athletes to keep their hamstring muscles free for good range of motion, posture and balance. This is another exercise to do periodically throughout the day.

**#8 “Calf Stretch”** – From the hamstring stretch position, bend the front knee forward and keep the back foot flat to feel the stretch of the muscles in the back of the lower leg.

**#9 “Back Stretch”** – Set your feet shoulder width, place your hands on your knees and bend your legs making your back flat and at horizontal position. Slowly raise your head and hold. This is a great stretch for the muscles nearest your spine.

**#10 “Side Stretch”** – From the #9 Back Stretch position, place your left hand behind your head and twist to the right, bringing your head down to the outside of your right foot. Feel the stretching of the muscles up and down the left side of your back. Switch hands and reverse the exercise to the left.

**#11 “Cat Stretch”** – From the Back Stretch position, bring your head down and round your back upwards. This is a great stretch for all the muscles in your back.

**Full Swing Warm-Up** . . . is stretching and activating the golf-specific muscles. The “continuous swing” exercise is the best exercise I have found to stretch and warm-up the golf muscles in a very short period of time.

Take your golf stance and posture without a club and place your hands six inches apart. Pick a spot on the ground as your focal point for staying centered as you swing but remember to let your head release towards the imaginary target as you reach the “impact position” in the swing.

Begin your continuous swing back and forth with a few half swings and progress to three-quarter swings and then full swings until you have made 10 swings. As you practice, concentrate on keeping your hands the same distance apart and concentrate on making a rhythmic, simultaneous swing of your arms and rotation of your body.

Use the same process with a 7-iron and then with a driver. The additional focus when swinging the clubs is to begin with and maintain the “just right” tension level of the arms and hands so that the club head weight’s momentum can create the proper hinging action of the wrists.

The “just right” tension level is to set your grip with the club head resting on the ground and then bring the club head up with your hands hinging your wrists to make the shaft at horizontal position. You want *just enough tension in your hands* to keep the shaft at horizontal. This is the proper tension level of the hands and arms for just about every golf shot. This tension level is key for creating a balanced golf swing with the proper coordination of the “arms swing, “body rotation” and wrists hinge”.

Chapter 4 of *Learn to Play Simply Great Golf* will teach you The Simplest Pitching and Full Swing Techniques of the Best Golfers and how you can develop and repeat these techniques with a high level of consistency for better scores.