

Unlocking Your Golf Swing

Tap into your potential with postural techniques to add distance and lower your scores this year

A **POWERFULLY** efficient golf swing requires that the shoulders turn while the head remains in a quiet position. Proper neck and upper extremity mobility is crucial to the fluid and full motion of the swing. For instance, a reduction in left neck rotation will reduce a right-hander's ability to turn during the backswing. As a result, when golfers think they need to increase their shoulder turn, they end up compensating by swaying or making a reverse pivot that adversely affect one's ball-striking. We all can relate to the lack of

fluidity in our swing, evidenced by the feeling of tight hamstrings or a stiff lower back, especially when we're not playing as much during the winter months. The neck and shoulders are often overlooked as regions for mobility because they can have immobility without obvious pain or stiffness. Neck and shoulder flexibility is a key ingredient in generating clubhead speed.

Below, find some tips that will help ensure your neck and shoulder mobility and make golf a game for a lifetime.

PHOTOS BY SCOTT K. BROWN

TURTLE TECHNIQUE

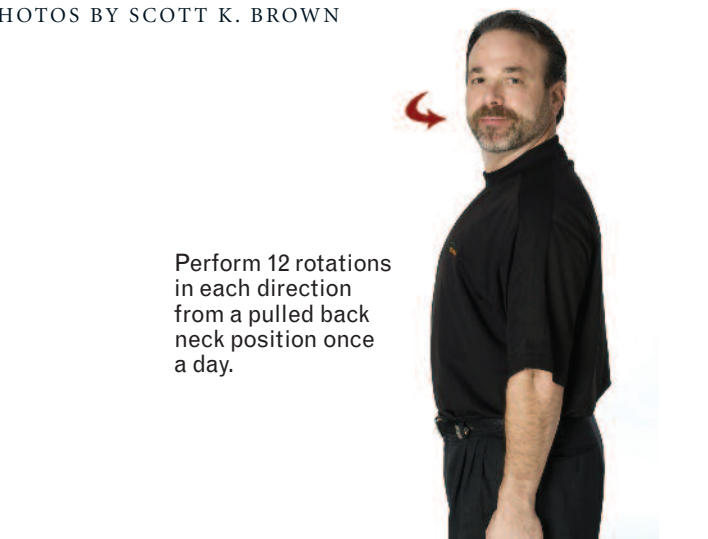
1. Stand normally and observe the range of motion of your neck by slowly turning your head all the way to the left then to the right to see where you feel a limitation of motion. At full rotation, your chin should be parallel with your shoulder.
2. Jut your head far forward like a turtle and once again, turn your head to the left and then the right. Most people find that this exaggerated forward head posture significantly restricts their neck rotation. Why? In everyday activities, we ingrain bad habits by slumping behind a computer or while sitting behind the wheel when driving.
3. Retract your head such that it is in a "pulled back" position (*pictured right*) and slowly turn your head to the left and then the right. When the head is back and normally balanced over the torso, there is greater range of motion because it does not stress the joints of the neck and "unlocks" your swing.

TOWEL DRILL

There is a common misunderstanding that torso mobility and shoulder turn is created from the lower back. Actually, it is the mid and upper back that provide the majority of torso and shoulder mobility. Due to postural slouching and forward head carriage, the upper back is typically rounded which leads to immobility in the upper torso, shoulders and neck.

Unlock your spine in the upper back by trying the following easy and effective exercise in order to get rolling with your swing.

Roll up your largest bath towel and place it on the floor. With the towel perpendicular to your spine, keep your knees bent and lie on your back, over the towel at the level



Perform 12 rotations in each direction from a pulled back neck position once a day.



Using something as simple as a bath towel, place it perpendicular to your spine and keep your knees in a bent position. Then move the towel up your back 3-4 inches, hold for 30 seconds and repeat this motion 3-4 inches below the level of your shoulder blades.

of your shoulder blades for 30 seconds. Then, move the towel up your back 3-4 inches and repeat the motion. Finally, move the towel 3-4 inches down your back from the original position and repeat.

THE KEY TO EXTENSION

A lot of golfers are told the key to a powerful swing is to “extend and release” on the follow-through. This is an excellent tip, but for many recreational players like me, our daily habits ultimately preclude us from making a good turn and a sound, repeatable swing.

Think about it: When we’re performing daily tasks from a seated posture, our shoulders are rounded and our head is in a forward position. The typical result is tight muscle groups at the base of your neck and weak muscles at the bottom of your shoulder blades.

In order to combat the effects of posturally-induced muscle imbalances of the upper body, try the following exercises several times a week; the drills just take minutes.



1. Stand tall and extend both arms at length with your palms facing forward. Squeeze both shoulder blades together, then release. Repeat this motion between 10 and 12 times.



2. With this same posture, maintain the squeeze in your shoulder blades and make 12 small clockwise circles, then repeat 12 in the reverse direction.

3. Now, bend at the waist and lean onto a countertop or desk, placing both arms at length. Extending one arm at a time, slide it forward as far as it will go, flip your palm, then lift the entire arm toward the ceiling without bending your elbow. Repeat the activity 10 times with each arm. You will notice that one arm will be more difficult than the other, indicating a greater instability and immobility on that side. Do more repetitions on that side.

YOU CAN FREE UP your swing for the season with the benefits and take-home messages of the aforementioned exercises. Whether at the office or on the course, learn to keep your head pulled back and minimize slouching by pulling your shoulder blades together and remaining at attention.



Get the most out of your game: Start by extending your arms, maintain a squeeze in your shoulder blades and rotate your arms in small clockwise and counterclockwise circles.



Using a flat surface as an aid, extend an open palm upward. Raise your arm toward the ceiling 12 times with minimal bend in the elbow.

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