



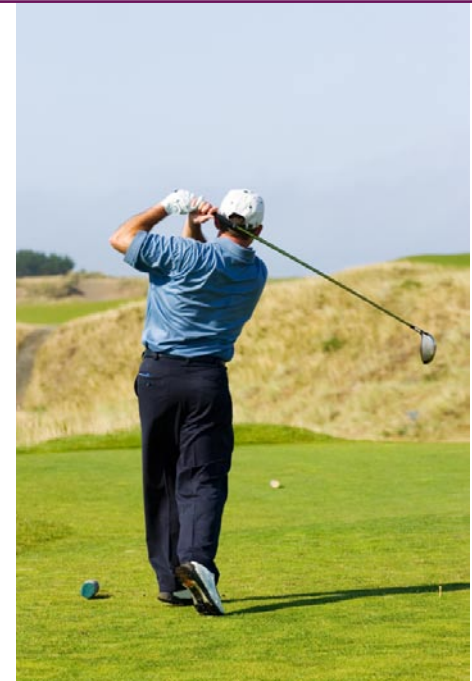
Pilates Pre-Game Routine for Golf

The following Pilates exercise sequence is designed to improve your stance, stability, grip and mental focus. Before each round of golf, go through the full sequence once to warm-up your muscles and relax any tension.

1. Relaxation Position

This position prepares the body for exercise, releasing unwanted tension and allowing the mind to focus. It is also excellent after a round of golf for balancing the body and relieving aches and pains:

- Lie on a mat with your knees bent, your feet in line with your hips, and your toes parallel. Your chin should be parallel to the floor so place a firm, flat pillow under your head, if necessary.
- Allow your whole body to widen and lengthen. Notice any areas of tension and gently allow them to melt into the floor. Now check that your pelvis is in its natural neutral position—neither tucked nor arched.
- Place your hands on your lower ribcage. With your next intake of breath, allow your ribs to expand wide and full so that you are breathing into your sides and into the floor.
- As you breathe out, allow the ribs to close down and the breastbone to soften. Repeat five times.



2. Stabilizing the Pelvis: Knee Circles

It is crucial when playing golf that you are able to keep your pelvis stable while swinging, otherwise you risk injury to your lumbar spine and hips.

- Lie in the 'Relaxation Position'. Wrap a scarf around one thigh, holding it from underneath so that the shoulders stay down and relaxed. Fold the knee up, so that it is directly above the hip.
- Keeping the pelvis neutral, still and stable—not allowing it to rock from side to side—gently and slowly circle the bent leg around.
- Breathe normally as you do so, engaging your core muscles throughout.
- Think of releasing the thighbone from the hip socket. Allow the scarf, and your hands, to help move the leg. Circle five times clockwise and five counter-clockwise with each leg.



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3. Shoulder Stretch

This exercise will help release tension from the shoulders before you play so that your arms will swing naturally. It also helps relieve tension after a game!

- Lie in the 'Relaxation Position'. Raise both arms directly above your shoulders with the palms facing inwards.
- Breathe in wide and full to prepare.
- Breathe out, engage core muscles, keeping the pelvis still and square. Reach one hand up across the other as if you are stretching up to where the ceiling meets the wall. Your shoulder blade will leave the floor, your head should move gently with you. Enjoy the stretch between the shoulder blades.
- Breathe in and hold the stretch.
Breathe out and relax the shoulder back down to the floor. Repeat 10 times on each side, making sure that the pelvis stays still.

4. Stance

This is not the same way that you will stand while addressing the ball, but it contains all the directions you need to help you stand normally in a balanced way.

- Stand comfortably with your feet hip-width apart, your feet parallel. Imagine a helium-filled balloon on a string attached to the top of your head, lifting you up. Let your arms hang comfortably by your side.
- Allow your shoulder blades to rest down into your back. Feel your waist lengthen.
- Let your tailbone gently drop towards the floor as if you had a weight attached to it, but still maintaining the natural neutral spine/pelvis position.
- Gently engage core muscles. Release your knees, unlocking them.
- Spread your feet on the floor, distributing the weight evenly. Imagine a triangle from the base of the big toe, the base of the little toe and the centre of the heel. Your weight should be evenly balanced.

5. Wrists, Palms & Fingers

An unusual movement for the arms, it helps to correct the muscle imbalances that can lead to golfer's elbow and repetitive strain injuries.

- Start in the same position as in 'Stance'.
- Breathe in and lengthen up through the spine.
- Breathe out, engage core, bend the elbows and flex the hands towards you, pushing through the wrists, the heel of the hand, the palms and fingers as if you are pushing through water.
- Breathe in and return to the starting position. Repeat eight times, keeping your shoulders down and the movement smooth and flowing.



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6. Roll Downs

“Use the spine like a wheel,” taught Joseph Pilates—what we are aiming for is a spine that is both flexible and strong throughout its length, with each segment equally stable and mobile. First practise this exercise against a wall before trying it free standing. Remember to breathe out as you move the spine.

Once you have mastered rolling the spine from the wall, you may roll down without a wall behind, just imagining it is still there. The legs will be straighter but the knees still soft.

- Stand with your feet about forty-five centimetres from a wall, hip-width apart and in parallel. Lean back into the wall bending the knees—if viewed from the side, you will look as though you are sitting on a high bar stool. Don’t try to take your head back onto the wall.
- Breathe in to prepare and lengthen up through the spine.
- Breathe out, engage core muscles, allow the chin to drop forward by letting go of the head and neck. Allow the weight of your head to help you roll forward.
- Peel the spine off the wall. Your neck, arms and hands are relaxed. Your bottom remains on the wall. Only go as far as you are comfortable, but aim to reach the floor eventually—you may bend your knees more.
- Breathe in as you hang, keep zipping and hollowing.
- Breathe out, zip up and hollow, rotate the pelvis backwards, bringing the pubic bone towards the chin, slowly vertebrae by vertebrae curl your spine back onto the wall as you come up. Repeat six times, rolling the spine and ‘working out’ any stiff areas.

Be sure to check with your general physician before starting any exercise routine and if you experience any pain during this pre-game warm-up, stop the exercise immediately and consult with your physician.

The success of the Pilates Method is based on quality of movement, rather than quantity. Remain focussed on your breath and engaging the core muscles throughout each exercise.

For more information on the principles of Pilates and for a recommended reading list for Pilates for Golf, visit: www.pilates-trends.com.

