

Big Muscles or Smart Muscles?

Think pumping iron at the gym will help you hit it further? Think again says Bob Wood.

Are you interested in getting better shape, loose a few inches, and driving the ball 300 yards?

Instead of spoiling yourself with a £300 driver, you're going to spoil your body with a year's subscription to a gym. Smart move. Or is it?

Joining a gym might seem like the solution to hitting the ball further but doing the wrong exercises could do more harm

than good to your swing.

First you need to find a member of staff or personal trainer who can give you a thorough fitness screen to find out your strengths and weaknesses and formulate a golf-specific programme. I'd recommend you work on flexibility and stability together for at least six weeks before you tackle any strength components.

To help you with your own

programme, here are five gym exercises that could harm your swing and the smart alternatives.

Fact 1: The golf swing is an athletic movement. You need high levels of flexibility, strength, endurance and power from the body to hit the ball well. Improve these and you will become a better player.

Fact 2: Gym exercises build dumb muscles. The modern gym is

dominated by machines. They're easy to use, safe, but undemanding in terms of movement ability and unchallenging in terms of reflexes, balance and space. Dumb exercises.

Fact 3: The smart golfer will train the body with expansive, multi-dimensional movements that challenge balance, flexibility, stability and strength.

BAD GYM EXERCISE 1 **PEC DECK**

Why it's bad:

- It doesn't challenge you to balance.
- The machine dictates your movement, not you.
- You never reach your end range of movement.

GOOD GYM EXERCISE 1 **DUMBBELL LIFT**

Why it's good:

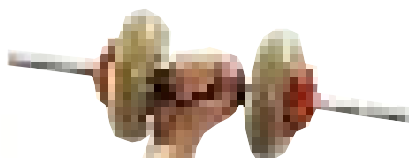
- It integrates stability and balance.
- It challenges golf specific pelvic stability.
- Using a dumbbell frees your range of movement.

How to do the exercise:

Form a bridge position with your ankles and knees at 90 degrees to the floor, your hips and spine directly in line resting on the ball and your tummy muscles drawn in. Punch each dumbbell upwards, alternating arms.



BAD GYM EXERCISE



STEP TWO
Keep hips and spine in line with the ground and punch each dumbbell upwards.



STEP ONE
Form a bridge position with your ankles and knees at 90° to the floor. Draw tummy muscles in.

GOOD GYM EXERCISE

**BAD GYM EXERCISE 2:
QUAD BENCH**

Why it's bad:
 ■ Both your feet are raised in midair, when in life does this ever happen?
 ■ Totally eliminates balance.
 ■ Encourages a poor pattern of movement.

**GOOD GYM EXERCISE 2:
CLOCK SQUAT**

Why it's good:
 ■ You're in a dynamic posture.
 ■ Encourages strong functional leg action.
 ■ Upper body rotation is integrated giving you a total body workout.



**BAD GYM EXERCISE 3:
ABDUCTOR**

Why it's bad:
 ■ Everything you can imagine is wrong about this exercise! It's completely undemanding and uninteresting.

**GOOD GYM EXERCISE 3:
RUBBER BAND SQUAT**

Why it's good:
 ■ It still targets the selected gluteal group but in a functional stance with a golf-specific posture.

THE PLAN

I'd recommend you work on flexibility and stability together for at least six weeks before you tackle any strength components. Gradually build up your CV tolerance before you go golf-specific with your training. When you're ready then ensure you perform these moves...

Clock squat

Make a three-quarter squat with the ball between your knees. Explode up and down at the same time with your arms straight and rotating around your head like the hands on a clock. Reach an abrupt stopping position at the bottom.

Band squat

Wear a sports rubber band around your ankles loosely and rest a golf club straight down your spine. Keep both feet facing forwards. Step sideways into a lunge stretching the band to full extent. Do this four or five times in both directions until it burns!

The plank

Lay your elbows flat on the floor to support your body keeping your back straight. If you want to make the exercise harder raise one leg at a time and hold. Do not allow your spine to collapse. Progress the plank by resting on a stability ball and rotating your arms on the ball.

Star lunges

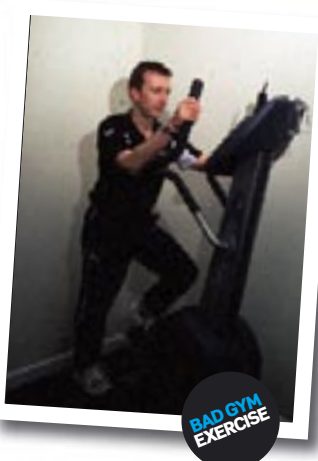
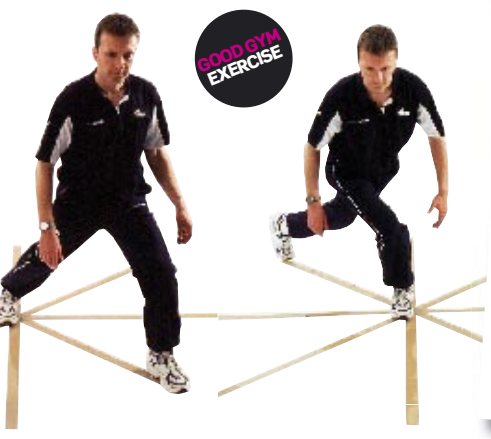
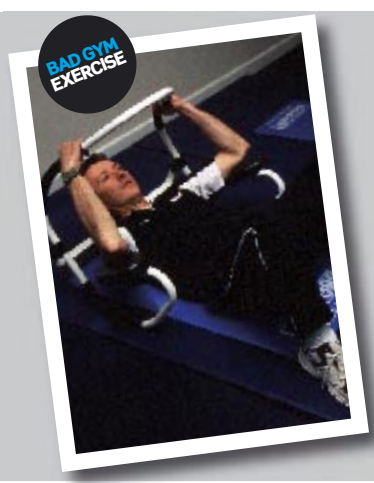
Draw a star on the floor as your guide. Make a half lunge along each star line keeping your centre foot fixed.

**BAD GYM EXERCISE 4:
AB CRADLE**

Why it's bad:
 ■ It's simply not a move you'd do in real life.
 ■ Your pelvis is jammed awkwardly against the floor.

**GOOD GYM EXERCISE 4:
THE PLANK**

Why it's good:
 ■ Your pelvis is now free to move so has to be stabilised by the abdominals, working them harder.



**BAD GYM EXERCISE 5:
CV STEP MACHINE**

Why it's bad:
 ■ It only challenges one range of movement and this is performed endlessly.

**GOOD GYM EXERCISE 5:
STAR LUNGES**

Why it's good:
 ■ It's a multi-directional exercise that challenges strength and stability.
 ■ It awakens all those golf-functional muscles and improves balance.

