

PREPARE: THE BODY

A few simple stretches before you tee off can prevent a nasty injury and help you to hit the ball further

Here's the deal. I am down the range practising my slice, and a guy slots in to the next bay - we'll call him a 'mature golfer'. His first move is to pull three clubs out of his bag, bunch them, take a grip, and flail them around his body horizontally like a hyperactive baseball player. After 30 seconds of this, he pops down a ball and hits it with a wedge.

"Strange warm-up," I'm thinking. In fact, I am wondering what kind of warm-up is actually more physically demanding than the game itself? Don't get me wrong, it is absolutely essential to warm-up for golf. If you are going to unleash a driver at more than 100mph with your 70 joints and 400 muscles, hoping to roll your ball up to the 300-yard marker, then these numbers just won't add up unless you have appropriately warmed up. But not like this!

The warm-up needs to be dynamic, rhythmical, and take the body through its golf-specific ranges, invigorate golf-specific nerves to get you performing straight from the 1st tee. Here are seven simple moves to awaken your golfing muscles the right way.

2. Side-to-side sway

Your next move should open out the side of your body - essential for a good body turn with that first swing. Stride forward with one foot. Hold a club overhead with your arms outstretched and drive it side to side, pushing your hips in a counter sway. Repeat five times on each side. Remember to keep your arms straight and your feet planted.



1. Wake up your spine

Start by awakening your spine and muscles. Take up a wide stance with your feet in-line, heels down and knees soft. Drive the club overhead forwards and backwards. Emphasise how the arms 'drive' the trunk. Repeat 10 times.



3. Twist your torso

Upper body rotation is the key to power hitting. The more you can turn your torso from the waist up, the greater the coil you'll achieve in the backswing. Stride forward with one foot. Hold a club in front of your chest and drive your whole body into a rhythmical rotation. All the time keep your arms straight and feet planted. Repeat on both sides.



4. Challenge your balance

Now you need to wake up your balance and stability. Stand on one leg with a club across the back of your shoulders. Rotate fully one way and then the other, and try not to plant your other foot down. You should be able to do three full body rotations without planting.



5. Back, shoulders, hips and calf stretch

Use a club as a prop, holding it out to the side of you. Rest both hands on the clubhead and keep your arms straight. Place one foot in front of the other, keeping your heels down. Drive down into flexion, getting down low to stretch your shoulders and upper spine back. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on both sides: remember to keep your heels down.



6. Time to get 'hippy'

Now you must do a specific hip internal rotation stretch - essential if you're to get anywhere near a full body turn. Turn your left leg fully inwards and lock it there with the right foot. Rotate your whole body to the left, placing your hands on top of the club and holding it steady in this end range position for 10 seconds. Repeat on right leg.



7. Open your spine

Finish with a spine, lats and groin stretch. Pop the butt end of your driver in your right pocket. Stretch the left hand over the top of your head, grasp the clubhead and drive into a side stretch, pushing the clubhead out to the side to open out the lats and shoulder. Release and push again five times, then repeat on the opposite side.

