

# 1 YOGA FOR GOLFERS

The game of golf is similar to the practice of yoga in that it requires fine-tuned focus and concentration, two key elements that are of equal importance in mastering any task. Yoga can help by not only enhancing a golfer's ability to hone in on the ball without distraction or frustration, but many poses are also beneficial for developing core torque and spinal flexibility to maximize the swing. In addition, certain yoga poses can reduce lower-back pain for ease and enjoyment in the game.

While practising yoga or standing on the putting green, our minds can have a tendency to wander and interfere with our goal.

**ONE WAY WE CAN LEARN TO CENTER OUR AWARENESS IS BY DIRECTING ATTENTION TO THE BREATH.**

There are many breathing techniques a yogi uses to stay on course. One method in particular is Ujayii Pranayama. To practise, gently narrow the passageway in the base of your throat as if to control the speed of air flow both through the in-breath and during the out-breath. Breathe only through your nose, inhaling for a count of four and exhaling for a count of six. Your breath should be slow, smooth and controlled. You know you are practising this correctly if you are generating a sound like a loud whisper, ocean waves or wind in the trees. It's a soft sound, mostly audible only by you, but it delivers many benefits toward mental concentration. It allows the mind to travel away from distraction and sharply focus on the task at hand. Next time you find yourself putting for a birdie, take a moment to practise Ujayii breathing and see how easy it is to sink the ball.



# Eagle...

Practising Eagle pose may not give you an Eagle on a par four hole, but it will enhance your ability to keep your mind free of distraction and sharpen your focus!

The first series of yoga postures helps to increase core torque and flexibility for power and range of motion in the golf swing. Each twisting posture develops the rotational ease for the spine and enhances muscle fortitude for the core and shoulders. A tight upper body can hinder a golfer's ability to hit the ball far down the fairway, so practising these simple yoga postures can provide a significant difference in the game. Would you like to drive the ball the furthest or remain stiff and end up breaking your driver over your knee?



## Basic Standing Twist

This pose will not only stretch your midsection, it will also strengthen your core.

- Standing on both feet, cross your left ankle over your right and place your left foot directly next to your right foot.
- Stretch both arms out to the side. Begin to twist by turning your right hip bone towards your left foot.

# Albatross & Birdie

Jill Lawson

To warm up, stand with your feet a little wider than hip-width apart.

- Bend your knees and flex forward from the hips.
- Place your hands on the tops of your thighs to support the weight of your upper body. Inhale deeply and on an exhale round your back, widening your shoulder blades and bringing your chin towards your chest.
- On your next inhale, arch your back slightly, reaching the crown of your head toward the sky and gently lift your tailbone. Feel your shoulders pulling away from your ears and your ribcage sliding away from your hips.
- Repeat for ten to twenty breaths until you feel your back moving with ease and fluidity.

Perform the following sequence of yoga poses on each side. Hold each pose for five Ujayii breaths, inhaling to lengthen your spine and exhaling to deepen into the twist, and then switch to the other side.



Warming Up

- Follow through with the twist by moving your ribcage around to the left, drawing your left shoulder and arm back.
- Next, to improve balance and deepen into the twist, spin your gaze over your left hand. Inhale to reach the top of your head to the sky and exhale to continue further into the twist.
- Pull in on the sides of your waist and feel the power between your hips and ribs.



## Parivrtta Chandrasana (revolving crescent lunge)

- Now, step your right foot behind you as you place your hands to the floor, coming into a runner's lunge with your right knee on or off the floor. Make sure your left knee is stacked directly above your ankle.
- Twist and place your right elbow to the outside of your left knee. Place both palms together and widen your elbows. Feel the torque of the twist occur in your waist, through your ribcage and shoulders. Spin your gaze back toward your left elbow.

## Parivrtta Uttanasana (revolving forward bend)

- Stand up and place your feet back into the golf stance position. Bring both hands to your hips and tip the upper body forward, bending from your hips, not your lower back.
- Place your right hand on your calf or, if you can reach, wrap your hand around the front of your right ankle. Bend your right knee but straighten your left leg, feeling the twist begin from your hips.
- Extend your left arm toward the sky, twisting from your hips to your waist, ribs and shoulders. Spin your gaze to your left hand and allow the crown of your head to lengthen away from your hips and shoulders, maintaining a long spine as you twist.

## Parivrtta Utkatasana (revolving chair pose)

- With your feet a golfer's stance distance apart, bend both knees and sit your hips back slightly behind your heels. Keep your spine long as you lean forward from the hips and bring
- Place both palms together and widen your elbows. Tuck the right side of your ribcage under and pull the left side up to the sky. Allow your right knee to move slightly in front of your left knee, to support a gentle twist through your hips.
- Spin your gaze back toward your left elbow. To modify this pose, proceed in the same fashion while sitting in a chair.



## Salabasana (locust pose):

- To reduce fatigue in your lower back during a round of golf, lie on your stomach with your arms and legs extended behind you.
- With your palms facing the ceiling, lift your arms and the front of your body off the ground. Raise the crown of your head towards the sky and draw your shoulders down and back. Squeeze your shoulder-blades together as you reach your lower belly toward your spine.
- You may also lift both legs up off of the floor, keeping your feet hip width apart. Hold this pose for 5-10 Ujayii breaths while fixing your gaze at a spot in the distance.

These poses can be done before playing golf, or up to three times a week on off days. As it is important to maintain balance and symmetry in yoga, it is of equal importance to pay attention to this in golf. For every time you take a swing to one side, it's recommended that you do a counter-stretch (a similar type movement in the opposite direction). This will also help to alleviate any lower back pain due to a muscle imbalance.



## Garudasana (eagle pose):

This pose (shown on page 00) is for mental focus, concentration and balance. You may practise Eagle pose next to a wall until you become more proficient in balancing. Place a golf ball about 6 feet in front of you on the floor or ground. Fix your gaze on the ball, it will help you balance and stay focused.

- Stand in a comfortable golf stance. Cross your right leg over your bent left thigh, as if you are sitting cross-legged in a chair. You may leave your right foot floating or to further enhance the pose, hook your right foot around the back of your left calf. Sink deep into your hips and legs.
- Cross your left arm in front of your chest and sweep your right arm under your left, bending both elbows. Continue to wrap your forearms and wrists, and if you can, place both palms together.
- Hold the pose for 5 Ujayii breaths or for as long as you can. Keep your eye on the ball.

**Practising yoga may not give you a hole in one, an ace shot or prevent a triple bogey, but it will enhance your spinal flexibility, improve your low back strength and sharpen your mental focus. What could be better than improving your drive, maintaining a pain-free lower back and resisting the urge to throw your golf clubs into the bushes? Practise yoga, because as the late, great Pattabhi Jois quotes, "Do your practice and all is coming," I say practise yoga and your golf game will improve! "Fore!"**