



Sport Specific Yoga for Golfers

Yoga is an ancient system for enhancing physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

Practising yoga can be a highly effective way to improve performance in your golf game, but it is also beneficial for general day to day health and wellbeing. It makes you feel good and its fun!

Practising yoga brings:

- flexibility,
- strength,
- balance & stability,
- postural awareness/alignment,
- core strength,
- fluidity of movement,
- stamina,
- focus & concentration, mental calmness & a quiet mind.

Golfers look to improve some or all of the above areas in order to increase performance in their game. For example, a golf swing requires the hips and thoracic spine to be stable and flexible in order to generate a powerful and/or accurate shot.

‘What you’re looking for is a soft, flexible, fluid swing – that’s power.’ Earl Woods

Flexibility

Golfers can have stiffness and inflexibility in the lower back, hips, glutes, hamstrings, knees & ankles. They can hold tension in the upper back, shoulders & neck. Practising yoga will free up and bring space into these areas, and a softer, more open body will bring a more spacious and fluid golf swing.

Strength

Golfers need to be strong in order to assist the process of power generation. Yoga is not only about flexibility, its about generating strength too, which in turn brings stability to the body; practising yoga appropriately balances our need for flexibility AND strength. For example, to ease lower back pain it can be helpful to increase flexibility in spinal rotator muscles, but also increase strength in the spinal support muscles, to reduce strain in the back. Yoga techniques will bring strength, and also stability, to the feet, legs, hips, spine, torso, upper back, shoulders, arms.



Balance & Stability

A balanced golf swing brings improved club control and consistency. For example, in the address position, yoga techniques help to cultivate balance and stability through the feet which in turn generates a more balanced and stable swing. Progressing through the body, improved balance and stability gained from your yoga practice will help to bring even distribution of weight body as your weight shifts during the golf swing.

Postural Awareness/Alignment

Good posture is crucial for a golfer, enabling them to maximise delivery of power to the club head. For example, a slumped/rounded posture restricts movement of the shoulders and the neck, which has a dramatic effect on the ability to rotate the body during the backswing. The slightest misalignment in the address position, for example, can translate to a much larger misalignment in the shoulders and into the club head. Yoga generates awareness of and targets muscles along the kinetic chain to bring the body into good postural alignment.

Core Strength

Good core strength brings stability to the hips, pelvis, spine, and torso, from which place the limbs can move powerfully and with control. Yoga postures and techniques target, strengthen and lengthen core muscles, particularly deep postural muscles.

Fluidity/Efficiency of Movement

Fluidity of movement in the body assists with balance, weight transfer and power in your shot. Yoga teaches you how to sequentially engage muscles which brings fluidity of movement throughout the golf swing.

Stamina

Increasing your stamina can increase your performance on the golf course, particularly during the 2nd half of the round. Practising yoga postures and breathing techniques increase stamina and endurance helping to eliminate the back nine 'slump' in energy and concentration levels.

Focus & Concentration

Yoga helps golfers to quieten an overactive mind and thus achieve and maintain an 'in the zone' state of heightened focus and concentration. When the conscious mind is utilised the golfer over analyses their swing/shot/technique/performance which disrupts concentration and impairs physical performance. By using breath awareness, breathing techniques and increasing internal awareness generally, yoga helps bring the subconscious mind to the fore allowing you to play using intuition and long term memory, with a quiet mind and in a truly focussed way.



Symmetry & Asymmetry

A symmetrical golf stroke is more accurate, goes further and produces less strain on the body. The golf swing is asymmetrical and repetition of the swing creates larger and stronger muscles on dominant side of the body in the shoulders, biceps, forearms, upper back. These stronger muscles in the body are tighter and tight muscles restrict free movement and lead to limited range of motion; weaker muscles are softer and more flexible. So, in swinging your golf club you are constantly reducing the range of motion in your dominant side, which has an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of your golf swing. Yoga helps to restore symmetry in the body, releasing and opening on the stronger, tighter side of the body, and strengthening the weaker side. Bringing symmetry and balance to the body brings symmetry and balance to your golf swing.

The Mental Game

Golf is a sport that requires maximum concentration and is a game of stress and tension. Yoga teaches you to be present in your body and release tension; and cultivates patience, focus and concentration. When practising the physical yoga postures you are encouraged to draw your focus to your breath and observe what is really happening in your body as you practise. Focusing on the breath helps to clear the mind and reduces stress; observing what is happening as you practice occupies the mind and frees it from other distractions. Learning how to breathe well and practising appropriate breathing techniques, enhances the ability to draw within and focus, bringing a sense of mental clarity and calm.

'If you don't clutter your conscious mind with endless pointers and tips, you make it easier for your subconscious instincts to guide you.' Earl Woods

Golf specific yoga sessions incorporate techniques that are particularly relevant to golfers with the aim of improving your performance, prevent and heal injuries, and increase your enjoyment of the game.

If practising golf specific yoga appeals to you or you have any other queries, contact me, Helen, directly on 07788 550024, or via my website, www.yoga2you.co.uk.

