

Golf



For anyone who has attempted to play golf, the old adage “A game of golf is a good walk ruined!” may resonate loudly. So how can this supposedly simple game be broken down to allow for success and more importantly- enjoyment?!

LET'S TEE IT UP!

Standing on the first tee, you wouldn't just drop your ball hit would you? You would prepare for your shot- using the tee into the ground to the correct height, placing your ball on the tee carefully, standing behind it, looking down the fairway- focussing on something in the direction you want the ball to go. You would bring your gaze back and address the ball, checking body and feet alignment, grip (but not throttle) the club and then go through any practise swings/pre-shot routine you may have before stepping forward to drill the ball down the fairway...



So if this is (roughly) the process taken to prepare for the first shot on the course it would be remiss to think that no preparation whatsoever was needed prior to stepping on to the first tee!

As all golfers will attest, golf is a mental game as well as being a physical one. This is one reason why routine plays such a part on the course- distracting the brain from the gravity of the shot to come whether it is for your first 'par' or your first 'Major'. In this article, we will focus on aspects that will get the body physically ready for a game of golf, which in itself will support mental toughness, as well as minimising the risk of injury during the course of a 3½ hour walk.

FAVOURABLE ATTRIBUTES

For me, the attraction of golf is the complexity of what on the surface should be a simple game- hit the little ball into the hole. I am aware that there is a wide range of ability and so will guide you to different resources reflecting this, although the elements of fitness remain the same: Core stability and strength, Glute (buttock muscles) activation and strength, Upper body rotation, Lower body rotation and Upper and Lower Body separation. Making the exercises as functional as possible (so they transfer smoothly) is key.



For beginners, it is often said that as a skill, putting is where the largest number of shots will be saved. With respect to fitness and training, we need to be aware of the mechanics of the swing, the muscles involved and be very aware that muscular endurance is hugely important (being able to replicate the same movements requires the same muscles to contract and relax in the same movement patterns) to avoid muscular fatigue and deterioration in performance. [Follow this link to an article and videos demonstrating some of the key exercises for beginners.](#)

Those who are fortunate to have a handicap (that is not their clubs) will be looking to generate more consistency in their movement patterns and be able to counter any weather conditions and various terrains as a wider variety of golf courses are played. [This video link](#) demonstrates 16 key workouts/exercises that can be achieved anywhere. Again, the core (abdominals, lower back, hips and buttocks) are the main focus as if this region is unstable, the chance of swinging arms contacting the ball in the right place are massively reduced (unless you have arms that “just work” - like Jim Furyk).

Finally, if you have a low handicap or are pro/semi-pro, this is a good article for you, written by a strength and conditioning coach who works with PGA players.

There is a real juxtaposition in golf, which may well be why it is such a difficult game to master; it requires **stability and mobility**. Stability conjures visions of rigidity- quite the opposite of mobility (fluid movement) and this is where many golfing injuries stem from.

GOLFING INJURIES TO BE AWARE OF

- A mobile top half and a rigid bottom half can lead to a hernia
- Not enough rotation at the hips through ball striking means speed (force) has to be generated by the arms which can lead to golfer's elbow (medial epicondylitis) or shoulder/neck/lower back pain. The repetitive nature of a golf swing means the same muscles are put under stress; fatigue and injury are then more likely to occur.
- A rigid stance/walking can lead to lateral (side) hip pain or knee pain
- A rigid (or immobile) lower back puts more stress on the shoulders to try and generate the desired rotation of the body prior to the down swing.

WHERE NEXT IN SOUTH DEVON?

Driving range/coaching: [Torbay golf centre](#)

Pitch 'n' Putt/coaching: [Cayman Golf](#)

Golf Courses/coaching: [Churston Golf Course](#), [Dainton Park Golf Course](#), [Torquay Golf Course](#)