

## Posture, Posture, Posture

“Stand up straight”, “Sit up straight”. How many times did you hear that growing up? Good posture is important for many reasons, not the least of which is confidence and self-esteem. Although most parents probably did not have golf in mind, **proper posture also aligns the body in a way that promotes the most efficient movement patterns with the least amount of stress.** Our body’s framework, the skeleton, and the muscles that control movement are engineered to work most efficiently when aligned correctly.

Take the spine as an example. When looking at it from a side view there are 3 “natural” curves, one each in the neck (cervical), mid back (thoracic) and low back (lumbar) areas. These curves are there for a reason. It is in this “posture” that the spine, the ligaments and the muscles supporting it, are best able to absorb and distribute force and provide stability and strength. When flexing, extending, twisting, side bending or any combination of those (as in the golf swing), you want to maintain a posture that will optimize efficient movement patterns and performance as much as possible. The more we deviate from the ideal posture, the more other areas have to compensate and inconsistency, fatigue and injury will eventually result.

Golf includes both “static” and “dynamic postures”. We are static at address but dynamic throughout the backswing, downswing and follow-through. Your posture at address dictates how efficiently you will move throughout the rest of the swing, from your ankles, knees and hips to the trunk, shoulders and head. Good posture at address, and the ability to **maintain\*** proper posture throughout the swing, promotes efficient movement and allows for a more reliable axis of rotation throughout the golf swing which then permits more precise coordination of the legs and arms with our core; compensations that result in mis-hits are minimized and a more reliable and powerful swing realized. For instance, if your back is rounded and your shoulders forward, your spinal and shoulder rotation will be limited and power compromised.

Proper posture must also be practiced during your workouts and daily activities. For most golf specific exercises, it's not about how much weight you can lift but about the quality of the movement. When performing an exercise and working with or against a resistance of any kind, especially a sport specific movement, focus on your posture, technique, balance and coordination. During all exercises, especially a sport specific movement, it is important to establish and maintain correct posture prior to and during the movement. A quick checklist prior to each exercise might include “**P.E.P.**”: **Posture, Engage, Perform:**

1. **Posture** includes keeping your shoulders back, chest out with your spine in neutral before getting into the position required to perform the exercise.
2. **Engage** the abdominal/core muscles in this neutral spine posture prior to and during the exercise. This can be accomplished by pulling your belly button in towards your spine and making a hard “S” sound so the abdominal and back muscles engage. Or pretend that you’re trying to fit into a tight pair of pants by pulling in your belly button, shrinking your waist and “getting tall”. Again, this helps stabilize and protect your spine and back muscles while promoting more efficient movement.
3. **Perform** the movement. Maintain the neutral posture with your core muscles engaged throughout the entire exercise and when applicable, mimic the swing as best you can from posture to weight shift to balance while keeping your head still, ‘eyes on the ball’.

So if you want a more reliable golf swing and more consistent scoring, posture is a fundamental that cannot be overlooked. Proper posture at address sets the tone for the rest of the swing and promotes a more efficient, consistent golf swing. The ability to maintain your posture throughout the swing is one of the keys to a more consistent and repeatable swing. Optimal flexibility and strength enable you to get into and maintain your posture throughout the swing and serve as the building blocks for stability, balance, coordination and power. Not everybody is going to have “perfect” posture, but the closer you are the less you will compensate and the less likely an injury will occur.

\*Before you send constructive criticism, I realize that posture at impact, with regards to shoulder tilt, hips and spine angle will be different from your set up posture, but on the whole, "posture" at the ankles, knees, hips and spine need to be maintained for consistent, reliable contact.