

PHYSICAL RESILIENCE FOR FILM & TV CREW

Many of us have working positions that require us to be in static positions for long periods without really moving much and so it is no coincidence that many of us suffer from neck and shoulder tension, headaches and back pain. Not only is this physically uncomfortable but it also affects our ability to concentrate and be productive.

The following menu of exercises has been designed to help prevent postural strain and contains a mixture of stretches which you can do on set, at your desk and at home.

Before you start...

- Take each of these exercises gently, nothing should hurt when you are doing them, and if it does then don't do it!
- Stretches should be taken to the point of mild discomfort only, there is no need to push any further.
- The number of times that you do the exercises is up to your discretion, do only as many as feel comfortable.

Finding your neutral position

This is a quick and easy method of setting a neutral position whether sitting or standing. In this position, all your postural muscles can be relaxed and it should be fairly effortless to maintain the position. It is also a good habit to be able to reset to this position later in the day whenever you are feeling fatigued.



SITTING

Sit tall and relaxed, feet shoulder-width apart. Rock forward and back on your sitting bones to find the mid-point, and then rock side to side to find the mid-point. Tuck your 'tail' in to make a level pelvis. Lengthen your neck, upper back and relax your shoulders.



STANDING

Stand tall and relaxed, feet shoulder-width apart, soften your knees a little and let your arms hang by your sides. Rock forward and back on your feet to find the mid-point, and then rock side to side to find the mid-point. Tuck your 'tail' in to make a level pelvis. Lengthen your neck, upper back and relax your shoulders.

Stretches to do on set, or at your desk

This short menu of movements helps to alleviate postural tension and can be done in your workspace. It is easy to do and takes only a few minutes. You can do any of these movements at any time throughout your day or at the end of your day, and you can do as few or as many repetitions of each movement as feel right for you. If you can get up and walk around or do some of your work standing then this will also help to prevent the build-up of tension.



REVERSE HAND FOREARM STRETCH

Interlace your fingers with your palms facing you, then turn your hands over so that your palms face away from you, at the same time straightening your elbows. Hold this position for a few seconds, then relax your elbows and bring your palms back towards your chest. Repeat the stretch several times until it feels easier to do.



NECK MOBILISER

Sit or stand and lengthen your back and neck. Draw your chin backwards and then poke your chin forwards. Repeat this a few times to help to keep your neck mobile.



45-DEGREE NODDING

Sit or stand and lengthen your back and neck. Turn your head 45 degrees and then nod your head, bringing your chin down towards your collarbone. Repeat this a few times (not too slowly) and then turn your head the other way and repeat the other side.



REACH FOR THE SKY

It can be done sitting or standing but standing is better. Put both arms up above your head and then reach as far upwards as you can with one arm. Keep both feet on the ground and feel the stretch through your whole back and rib cage. Repeat a few times and then do the same with the other arm.



BACK TWISTS

Stand, or sit, and twist your whole back one way and then the other. Maintain a forward-facing pelvis to avoid the knees becoming involved. You can do this for a few seconds at any time during your day.



MID-BACK MOBILISER

Stand, or sit, and round your shoulders forwards and bend forwards with your upper back, then arch backwards and squeeze your shoulder blades together. A few repetitions done a few times a day will help keep some mobility in your upper back.



Stretches to do at home



TRICEPS STRETCH

Place your right hand on the top of your left shoulder and then press the back of your right elbow with your left hand. When you meet some resistance hold it there for a few seconds, relax and repeat. Then do the same with the other shoulder.



LOW BACK STRETCH

If you have been standing for a while and your back is aching this can provide a nice relief. Place your foot flat on a chair and bend forwards to bring the middle of your chest to your knee. Just let your arms hang and hold the position for a few seconds. This can be a good stretch for the gluteal muscles too, so try it with the other leg as well.



HAMSTRING STRETCH

Place your heel on a chair and keeping your back straight, lean forwards. You won't get far until your hamstrings feel the stretch. Hold for a few seconds and then repeat for the other leg.



QUADS STRETCH

To stretch the quadriceps muscles at the front of your thigh bend your knee and aim to hold your heel against your bottom for a few seconds. Then repeat for the other leg. You can do this standing and you may need to hold on to something for balance, but it is more effective to do it lying on your front if you can, as shown in the picture.



CALF STRETCH

1. Stand facing a wall and place your hands against it, with straight arms. Have one knee bent and the other leg out behind you and straight and lean forward keeping the back heel on the ground. Hold this for a few seconds and repeat for the other leg.



2. A variation of this exercise is for some deeper muscles in the calf. For this stretch adopt the same position but this time bend the back knee a little and feel the stretch in your calf.



GLUTEAL STRETCH

Our gluteal muscles do a lot for us and they can get tight and/or weak and can be an indirect source of low back pain.

Lie on your back and bend your hips and knees, cross one knee over the other and then draw your knees towards your chest. Hold the stretch as soon as you feel some resistance. Repeat for the other side.



From the same starting position, this time place your ankle over the other knee and then draw your knees towards your chest. You should feel the stretch in a slightly different place now. Repeat for the other side.



This is a variation of a gluteal stretch if you are sitting. Place your right ankle over your left knee, place your right hand on your right knee just to keep it from lifting up. Keep a straight back and lean forwards from the hips. You won't have to move very far to feel the stretch. If you have problem knees, then avoid this stretch.

Foot and Ankle Mobility



HEEL RAISES

Standing or sitting, place your feet flat on the floor and raise your heel off the floor with alternate legs a few times. This will help to keep the ankles and feet mobile, and will exercise your calf muscles too, which will help your circulation. You could of course do this with both feet at the same time, raising yourself on your tiptoes and down again a few times.



FOREFOOT LIFT

With your feet still flat on the floor, lift the front of each foot up and down a few times in turn by pivoting on the heels. This works the calf muscles and maintains the circulation.



TOE SCRUNCH

Place your feet flat on the floor and scrunch your toes up a few times. This helps to connect our brain to our feet so that we have a solid foundation.

Stretches to do if your low back aches



THE SPHINX

If your low back is aching this is a nice position to adopt to counteract the tension in your low back. Lie on your front, up on your elbows. You don't have to do anything more, just relax, and the tension in your back should slowly fade. There is no need to push up. You can stay in this position for several minutes.



LYING OVER A ROLLED-UP TOWEL

Take a towel and roll it up tightly. Lie on your back with hips and knees bent, and your feet flat on the floor. You could place your feet hip-width apart and keep your knees together in the form of a tripod. Place the towel under your low back and lie in this position for a few minutes and just relax. Remove the towel before you get up. It is advisable to not fall asleep in this position!



PELVIC TILTS

This is an effective but nice movement to encourage some movement in a stiff back. It is non-weight-bearing and so is not going to trouble our pain receptors too much. Lie on your back with hips and knees bent, with your feet flat on the floor. Simply tilt your pelvis backwards as if pressing your lumbar spine into the floor. Then rotate the pelvis the other way so that you are creating an arch in your low back. This direction will probably not feel so easy. Rock forwards and backwards several times, keeping the movement only to the low back. It should begin to feel easier after a few movements. You can do these movements sitting or standing as well but lying flat is best.



LEG SLIDES

This movement is also non-threatening to a grumpy back and moves the low back joints in a different plane. Lie flat on your back with both legs straight. By moving from your pelvis, slide one leg away from you (away from your head) at the same time as drawing up the hip on the other side. Your heels and knees stay flat on the floor all the time. Repeat this several times at tempo similar to walking pace until it begins to feel easier.

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A routine to build postural stability

You can do a selection of these exercises a few times a week to help to condition the muscles that support your posture.



SIMPLE SQUAT

The simple squat is a good way of maintaining the muscles of your legs, your back and your abdominal muscles. Stand with your feet two shoulder-widths apart, you can cross your arms across your chest to keep them out of the way, and then, keeping a straight back and neck, bend your ankles, hips and knees.



MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

Start in a plank position. It might be easier to do this using a bench or a seat to place your forearms on. Maintain a straight back and neck, then draw one knee up towards your chest. Repeat this several times and then do the same for the other leg. Maintain your form throughout.



SUPERMAN

This exercise is great because works so many things at once. It is a good idea to feel comfortable with doing this for arms only, and then legs only before moving on to do the full exercise.

1. Arms only

Start in a kneeling position with a flat back. Raise one arm until it is in the same line as your back. Keep your wrist straight. Hold it there for a few moments and then return it. Do the same for the other arm. Repeat a few times and maintain your form.

2. Legs only

From the same kneeling position straighten one leg by pressing out with your heel. The leg should be in the same line as your back. Keep everything stable and keep your back straight and your pelvis level.

3. Full superman

When you can do arms only and legs only without strain or wobbling, move on to the full exercise instead. This time you are going to straighten one arm and the opposite leg. Take care to maintain your form throughout. Hold for a few seconds and repeat a few times for both sides.



SITTING OR STANDING KNEE RAISES TO MAINTAIN BALANCE AND STABILITY

Sit or stand in a neutral position and then raise one knee. Your trunk muscles should hold you upright without your body collapsing forwards, backwards or to one side. Put the knee down and do the same with the other knee raised.

To build your trunk strength you can raise both arms above your head, then bring them both down to 90 degrees to the sides, and then return them above your head, then bring them both forwards, and back up. Do this again with the other knee raised instead.

To build your stability and balance further you can bring your left arm forwards and the right to the side and back up, then repeat with the left arm to the side and the right arm forwards. You can do this with one knee raised, then with the other knee raised instead.

CLAM

This is an exercise for the gluteal muscles, which tend to get a bit neglected. Lie on your side with your hips and knees bent, then raise your upper knee until the leg is about 45 degrees. Lower it slowly. With this exercise the magic happens on the way down. Aim to make the movement smooth, and easy. Do as many repetitions as feel comfortable and smooth.



PRONE BACK RAISE

This is a set of exercises to strengthen the main back muscles, which are the ones that hold us upright all day. Take your time building up to the full movement and only do as many repetitions as feel comfortable.

1. Leg raises

Lie on your front and simply raise one straight leg a few degrees from the floor. It helps to clench the gluteal muscles at the start of each leg raise. Repeat a few times and then do the same for the other side. When your back feels strong enough, you could try the same movement with both legs at the same time. There is no need to go too high and it shouldn't feel like a strain.

2. Back raise full movement

This movement could be classed as strenuous so attempt it only if your back feels comfortable doing it. Nothing should feel like it is straining. The full movement is a combination of both arms, and trunk, as well as both legs. Slow and controlled is best and only do as many as feel comfortable.

PRONE SNOW ANGEL

This movement is a bit more dynamic and works the upper back muscles through their full range. Lie on your front and raise your straight arms a few degrees from the floor and move them both towards your head and then towards your feet, all the time keep them from touching the floor. Repeat a few times.

PRONE FLIES

Most of us spend a lot of time rounding our shoulders and our upper back and shoulder muscles get weak and tend to complain. Keeping this area strong helps to prevent postural strain. Lie on your front and raise both arms a few degrees from the floor. You can do this at different angles to work on different muscles.

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PHYSICAL RESILIENCE FOR FILM & TV CREW

GENERAL PHYSICAL WELLBEING:

- WALK, RUN, SWIM, CYCLE ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK
- ANYTHING THAT YOU LIKE DOING IS GOOD!
- RELAXATION, YOGA, MEDITATION, BREATHING RELAXATION
- KEEP HYDRATED • GO EASY ON THE CAFFEINE
- GO EASY ON SUGAR TOO • SLEEP WELL

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