



Shoulder, Elbow, Wrist, & Hand Releases

This series of exercises for the shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand release tension, relieve pain, and prevent and alleviate carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, frozen shoulder, and thoracic outlet syndrome.

Note: Each of these exercises can be practiced by itself, or as part of another series that you put together. When you do teach this series, it is beneficial to teach the Side Curl and Diagonal Curl first so the student can release their entire pattern of tension on that side of their torso.

EXERCISE DESCRIPTION

Starting Position: Lie down on the floor on your carpet or exercise mat. Bend your knees and put your feet on the floor, a comfortable hip width distance apart. Rest your hands on the floor by your sides.

Bent Arm Rotation: Bend your right arm at a 90 degree angle, and keeping your elbow next to your body, let your right hand rest out to the side on the floor with your palm facing up. Then, keeping your right elbow on the floor, slowly rotate your shoulder inward. Your shoulder will press off the floor and your hand will lift up. You should feel the muscles on the front of your shoulder contracting. Then, slowly release to the count of 16. As you lower down, you should feel the muscles on the front of your shoulder slowly and gently releasing. Repeat this movement if you wish.

Now, slide your arm upward on the floor, so that your elbow is pointing straight out from your shoulder. You should still have a 90 degree angle at your elbow. Keeping your elbow on the floor, start rotating your shoulder forward. Your shoulder will press forward off the floor, and your hand will lift up. Feel the muscles on the front of your shoulder contracting. Then, slowly release down to the count to the count of 16. Repeat this movement if you wish.

Reaching Up: Bring your right arm straight up in the air, with your palm facing toward the left. Reach your fingertips toward the ceiling as high as you can, letting your right shoulder press off the floor. Feel the muscles on the front of your right shoulder contracting. When you're ready, release your shoulder down to the floor to the count of 12 or longer, keeping your arm straight up in the air. As you lower down, you should feel the muscles on the front of your shoulder slowly and gently releasing. Repeat this movement if you wish.

Right Side of Scapula Scoops Part 2: Bring your right arm straight up in the air, with your palm facing toward the left. Relax your right elbow out to the side so that your right arm makes a half circle. Press your shoulder off the floor and feel the muscles in the front of your shoulder contracting. Then, slowly release your shoulder down and your arm outward to the count of 12.

Now, gently squeeze your right shoulder blade closer to your spine. Feel the contraction behind your shoulder, and feel the front of your shoulder and right side of your chest opening up. Then slowly and gently release that contraction.

One more time, reach your arm up in the air, and relax your elbow out to the side so that your arm makes a half circle. Press your shoulder off the floor and feel the muscles in the front of your shoulder contracting. Then, slowly release your shoulder down and your arm outward to the count of 12. Let your shoulder be off the floor until the very end.

Elbow and Wrist Flexion & Extension: Bring your right arm to rest on the floor by your side, and let your palm face the ceiling. Very slowly lift your right hand off the floor to the count of 8, just so you're making a 45 degree angle with your elbow. Then, lower down to the count of 12.

Again, lift your hand off the floor to the count of 8. Keep your elbow bent, and now to the count of 8, slowly flex your wrist so that your palm comes toward you, and squeeze your hand to make a fist. Then, let your hand come back to a neutral position to the count of 8. Now, extend your wrist and hand, and stretch out your palm and fingers to the count of 8. Then let your hand come back to a neutral position to the count of 8. Now, lower your hand back down to the floor, releasing to the count of 12. Repeat this sequence if you wish.

Hand Pandiculation: Come up to a comfortable seated position, either on the floor or in a chair. Squeeze the thumb and pinky finger of your right hand together. Now, bring the thumb and first two fingers of your left hand in between your right thumb and pinky. Start pressing your left thumb against your right thumb, and your left fingers against your right pinky. You're still squeezing your right thumb and pinky together, but your left hand is very slowly pushing them apart. It should take you to the count of 10 or 12 to fully release. You should keep squeezing your right thumb and pinky finger together until you reach your fully released position. Repeat this movement if you wish.

Repeat the entire sequence with your left arm.

ANATOMY OF THE SHOULDER, ELBOW, WRIST, & HAND RELEASES

This series of exercises releases the muscles that do the following actions; please see *Trail Guide to the Body* for a complete list.

- Medial rotation of the shoulder
- Abduction (protraction) of the scapula
- Horizontal adduction and abduction of the shoulder
- Flexion of the elbow
- Flexion and extension of the wrist
- Flexion and extension of the 2nd through 5th fingers
- Flexion of the thumb
- Opposition of the thumb (bringing the thumb and pinky together)

CONDITIONS HELPED BY THE SHOULDER, ELBOW, WRIST, & HAND RELEASES

The Shoulder, Elbow, Wrist, & Hand Releases help to alleviate the following conditions:

- Tension and pain in the shoulder, arm, and hand
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tennis elbow
- Frozen shoulder
- Thoracic outlet syndrome

HOW TO TEACH THE SHOULDER, ELBOW, WRIST, & HAND RELEASES

Get the student in their starting position. Your student should lie down on the floor on their carpet or exercise mat in their neutral starting position, with their knees bent and feet on the floor a comfortable hip width distance apart. They should rest their hands on the floor by their sides.

Teach the Bent Arm Rotation. Instruct your student to bend their right arm at 90 degrees, keeping their elbow next to their body, and let their right hand rest out to the side on the floor with their palm facing up. Then, instruct your student to slowly rotate their shoulder inward, keeping their elbow on the floor. Their shoulder will press off the floor, and their hand will lift up. Ask them to notice the muscles on the front of their shoulder contracting. Then, count to 16 as they slowly release their shoulder back to their starting position. Talk them through the movement one more time if you wish.

Instruct your student to slide their arm upward on the floor, so that their elbow is pointing straight out from their shoulder. They should still have a 90 degree angle at their elbow. Instruct your student to slowly rotate their shoulder forward, keeping their elbow on the floor. Their shoulder will press off the floor, and their hand will lift

up. Ask them to notice the muscles on the front of their shoulder contracting. Then, count to 16 as they slowly release their shoulder back to their starting position. Talk them through the movement one more time if you wish.

Teach the Reaching Up. Instruct your student to reach their right arm straight up in the air, with their palm facing toward their left side. Then tell them to reach their fingertips toward the ceiling as high as they can, letting their right shoulder press off the floor. Ask them to notice the muscles on the front of their right shoulder contracting. Then, count to 12 as they slowly release their shoulder back down to the floor, keeping their arm straight up in the air. Talk them through this movement one more time if you wish.

Teach the Right Side of Scapula Scoops Part 2. Starting with the right arm straight up in the air (following the previous movement) tell your student to relax their right elbow out to the side so that their right arm makes a half circle. Instruct your student to press their right shoulder off the floor, and to notice the muscles in the front of their shoulder contracting. Then, count to 12 as your student slowly releases their shoulder down and their arm out to the side.

When your student's arm has almost reached the floor, instruct them to gently squeeze their right shoulder blade closer to their spine. Ask them to notice the contraction of the muscles behind their shoulder, and to feel the front of their shoulder and right side of their chest opening up. Then, count to 8 as they slowly release that contraction.

Talk your student through the first part of this movement one more time. From where they are, tell them to press their right shoulder off the floor and bring their arm back up, making that half circle. Then, count to 12 as your student slowly releases their shoulder down and their arm out to the side. It should take the entire count of 12 for their shoulder to reach the floor.

Teach the Elbow and Wrist Flexion & Extension. Your student should begin this movement with their right arm resting on the floor along their right side, with their palm facing their ceiling. Instruct them to very slowly lift their right hand off the floor to the count of 8, to the point where they're making a 45 degree angle with their elbow. Then, count to 12 as they slowly lower their hand back down.

Again, instruct your student to slowly lift their right hand off the floor to the count of 8, to the point where they're making a 45 degree angle with their elbow. Tell them to keep their elbow bent as it is, and to slowly flex their wrist and make a fist to the count of 8. Then, count to 8 as they slowly release their wrist and hand to a neutral position.

Now instruct your student to extend their wrist and hand, spreading out their palm and fingers, to the count of 8. Then, count to 8 as they slowly release their wrist and hand to a neutral position. Finally, instruct your student to slowly release their hand back down to the floor to the count of 12. You can talk your student through this

sequence again if you wish.

Teach the Hand Pandiculation. Your student should come up to a comfortable seated position, either on the floor or in a chair. Instruct your student to squeeze the thumb and pinky finger of their right hand together. Tell your student to bring the thumb and first two fingers of their left hand in between their thumb and right pinky. Instruct your student to start pressing their left thumb against their right thumb, and their left fingers against their right pinky. Remind your student that they should still be squeezing their right thumb and right pinky together, but their left thumb and fingers are slowly pushing them apart. Count to 10 or 12 as your student slowly releases. Make sure they stay engaged until the end of their range of motion and do not release suddenly. You can talk your student through this movement one more time if you wish.

Common mistakes:

It is common for students to release too quickly in these movements. Counting to the numbers suggested (or longer!) is an easy way to get students to slow down so that they can get the benefit of the movements.

Some students might not press their shoulder off the floor when doing the Bent Arm Rotations, the Reaching Up, or the right side of Scapula Scoops Part 2. Be clear when teaching it the first time, and make sure they feel how their muscles contract when they press their shoulder off the floor.

***You can use the “EXERCISE DESCRIPTION” section as a sample script for the Shoulder, Elbow, Wrist, & Hand Releases.** As a reminder, it is best to teach and practice the Side Curl and the Diagonal Curl directly before practicing this series movements. In patterns of tension that involve the shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand, that same side of the torso is often tight as well.