

How can I apply yoga poses to sports activities I love?

“Balanced fitness” is a core goal in achieving health and optimal performance. Since Yoga postures (in Sanskrit, called “asanas”) have been around for at least 3000 years, many physical therapy, fitness and athletic training programs incorporate some aspect of postures, which were original to yoga. However, the best practices of yoga asanas also involve going within, development of dual focus, gently slowing the breath, and abdominal breathing. Yoga stretches *are* recommended both before exercise/practice - to prevent injury, and after, “reducing muscle soreness and stiffness.” However, that is not the only reason to use yoga!

Top trainers recommend exercises like yoga postures, as the most effective for strength training (i.e., lunges, warrior poses, plank, sun salutation and up dog). Regardless of the sport, complete warm-ups and cool downs will help prevent stress fractures. However, some sports rely more heavily on specific areas of the body, and extra attention is needed to maintain balance. For example, tennis requires great lunging ability, and flexibility in the spine and shoulders, so spinal twist/ lateral stretches, and warrior pose flow would be important.

Check out the Yoga Journal website articles for great information on applying yoga to other sports. Their “Yoga for Golfers” link sums up nicely, “Striving toward symmetry and balance is the essence of a yoga program, which breaks down tension the body has learned to work around. It is an intuitive process that takes practice to develop, much like a good golf game.”

Yoga is easy to incorporate, and many options exist, not only creating strength, but also greater flexibility, improved focus and concentration, and enhanced performance – balance inside and out.

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