

# How to Improve Shoulder Flexibility and Mobility

By **Michael Matthews**



**Shoulder pain and problems are very common among weightlifters. Banish them by improving shoulder flexibility and mobility.**

Inflexible shoulders get in the way of quite a few of your major lifts: namely the [squat](#), [military press](#), and [bench press](#).

[Shoulder pain](#), problems, and injuries are also pretty prevalent among weightlifters, primarily to improper [form on the bench press](#) and [shoulder presses](#), and an imbalance between chest and [back training](#). (Many guys focus too much on their chest training and neglect their backs, which results in the pectorals pulling the shoulders down and inward.)

Fortunately, you can overcome shoulder pain and inflexibility fairly easily if you address it properly.

Whether you're new to lifting or experienced, and whether you're currently experiencing shoulder problems or not, I recommend that you start doing stretching exercises every week. If you're currently dealing with shoulder impairments, they will improve symptoms; if you're not, they will help you maintain optimal shoulder health and function, as well as help prevent future injury.

Before we get to the flexibility and mobility routine, though, let's assess your current level of shoulder flexibility.

## A Simple Shoulder Flexibility Test

Here's an easy way to test your current shoulder flexibility

If you get into the arms-up position and someone at your side can't see your eyes (if your arm is in the way and you can't move it back enough to reveal your ear), your training will benefit greatly from improving your shoulder flexibility.

## The Best Shoulder Flexibility Exercises

If you're lacking shoulder flexibility, you should focus on two things to improve it:

- **Ensure you're not neglecting your [back muscles](#) in your training, as an imbalance between the chest and back development is the most common cause of shoulder problems.**
- **Do shoulder flexibility exercises several times per week.**

If you do both of these things, you can get rid of nagging shoulder issues you might be dealing with, and prevent them if you're not currently having any problems.

Now, regarding the exercises, there are a few points that you must keep in mind:

- **Don't stretch before your weightlifting as this can [increase the risk of shoulder injury](#).** Stretch after your weightlifting, or at another time altogether.
- **Don't try to push through tightness.** Don't approach flexibility exercises like weightlifting—don't try to blast through sticking points, as this can cause injury.

Stop at tightness, hold for 5 seconds, and release. You have to be patient when you're working on increasing mobility.

- **Take it slow at first, especially if you're [nursing an injury](#).** Again, building up flexibility takes time and patience, *especially* if you're recovering from an injury. Even minor strains can take several weeks to fully heal when cared for properly, and much longer if continually aggravated.

**A good place to start is to pick three exercises below for your routine, and perform 2 sets of 10 reps, with 60 seconds of rest in between each set. Do this twice per week.** As your flexibility improves, you can add in more exercises and/or sets as desired.

## **Shoulder Dislocations**

Don't worry—this doesn't result in dislocated shoulders.

It's actually a great all-around shoulder mobility exercise, and very simple to do.

The tightness of your shoulders will dictate how wide your grip needs to be. The tighter they are the wider you'll need to make your grip. As flexibility improves, however, you will be able to gradually narrow your grip.

People that are very flexible will be able to perform the exercise with their hands at less than two shoulder-widths apart.

## **Wall Extensions**

Wall Extensions are a very simple way to improve shoulder flexibility. Here's how they're done:

Here's what he's doing, just in case it's not totally clear:

- Stand with your back and heels against a flat wall.
- Extend your arms straight out to your sides, with your palms facing out (the backs of your hands against the wall).
- Bend your arms to move your forearms into an upright position (move your arms to a 90-degree angle).
- Carefully raise your arms above your head, keeping them flat against the wall.

Good flexibility allows you to fully extend your arms and touch your hands together while keeping your arms, elbows, and wrists touching the wall at all times.

## **Around the World**

This is a great exercise for not only improving shoulder flexibility, but for strengthening the rotator cuffs as well.

Start with a 25 lb plate if necessary and work your way up to a 45 lb plate.

## **Doorway Stretch**

The Doorway Stretch is an effective way to stretch your shoulders, and your anterior deltoids in particular.

## **My Shoulder Flexibility Routine**

Here's what I do twice per week:

- **2 sets of Shoulder Dislocations**
- **2 sets of Around the Worlds**
- **2 sets of Door Stretches**

This keeps my shoulders flexible and the joint tight and in alignment. I rarely ever experience shoulder pain or problems, and have been strain-free for years now (knock on wood).