



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

You can practice progressive muscle relaxation while lying down or sitting in a chair. Tense each muscle group for 5-7 seconds, then release and relax it for 20-30 seconds. Tense and relax each muscle group at least once. If a particular muscle group is particularly tight, you may want to tense and relax that group up to five times.

Muscle Group	Instructions
Hands and forearms	Clench your fists, palm down, and bring your hands toward your shoulders
Upper arms	Bend your elbows and “make a muscle” by tensing your biceps
Upper forehead	Raise your eyebrows and wrinkle your forehead
Lower forehead	Pull your eyebrows together; try to get them to meet
Eyes	Close your eyes tightly (be careful if you wear contacts)
Jaw	Open your mouth wide
Lips	Press your lips together, but try not to clench your teeth or jaw
Neck and back	Put your head back against the back of your chair
Shoulders	Shrug your shoulders up toward your ears
Chest	Take a deep breath and hold it for 5-7 seconds, then release it
Stomach	Pull your stomach in toward your back
Lower back	Arch your back without straining
Buttocks	Tighten your buttocks
Thighs and calves	Straighten and tense your legs and curl your toes downward
Shins and feet	Bend your toes toward your knees

Short on time? Try the abbreviated procedure for a mini boost of relaxation.

- 1) Curl both fists, tightening your biceps and forearms. Relax.
- 2) Push your head back against the chair. Relax.
- 3) Wrinkle your forehead, close your eyes tightly, open your mouth, and hunch your shoulders. Relax.
- 4) Arch your shoulders back as you take a deep breath into your chest. Hold. Relax. Take a deep breath, pushing out your stomach. Hold. Relax.
- 5) Point your toes back toward your knees, tensing your shins. Hold. Relax. Straighten your legs and curl your toes, tightening your calves, thighs, and buttocks. Relax.

