

Forearm-Roll on the Shoulders

When I first learned this technique, I wasn't comfortable with it. It felt awkward to do, I didn't understand how to roll my arm, and the receiver's body moved around too much. No one had taught me how to adjust my body positioning, how to apply downward pressure with my forearm, or how to relax the client's shoulder and neck muscles before doing the technique. Years later, thanks to an increased awareness of body mechanics and the guidance of other teachers, the magic of this technique became clear.

Setup

The receiver is in sitting position, with legs crossed comfortably and loosely. The person can extend his legs if crossing them is difficult or uncomfortable, but don't use cushions or props unless they're absolutely necessary. Allow the receiver to be as "grounded" as possible.

Kneel with one leg, and brace your partner's shoulder and outer arm against the inside of your half-standing leg. Your half-standing foot should be flat on the mat, somewhere near the middle of your partner's upper leg. Now support your partner's back against your abdomen or lower ribcage. Press slightly inward with your leg, and press slightly forward with your belly to lock the person in place.

Make sure that your partner's neck is relaxed before you do this technique. Loosen his neck muscles for as long as necessary by slowly bending the head with both hands from side to side and rotating the neck in circular patterns. The object is to gauge each person's tension, resistance, and holding patterns before you begin to work.



Before you begin, adjust the height of your body relative to the receiver. When you extend your forearm, you should be able to keep it flat on the client's shoulder. If your arm or hand is angled downward, your body is too high. In this case, sink your body lower into the mat by shifting your position downward and by moving your kneeling and supporting legs if necessary.

Depending on the relative size of the giver and receiver, it's sometimes helpful to drape the receiver's inside arm over your leg. This can be helpful when a taller person works on a shorter person. The height of the resting position of the shoulder can be easily lowered by sliding your retaining foot forward toward your partner's knees.

Rest your inside hand lightly on the top of his head, and roll your forearm inward all the way until your palm faces away from your body. Place it on the shoulder near the base of the neck, and close your fingers to make a fist. Make contact with the middle section of your forearm, and avoid the bony areas near the wrist and the elbow. Use only the soft, middle part of your forearm to do the rolling.



Flat arm position



With draped arm

Execution

Move his head inward toward your forearm with the heel of your inside hand until it stops and rests. This action relaxes the neck and shoulder muscles and allows you to nestle your inverted arm into the base of his neck. Begin with an inverted forearm and a lightly closed fist near the base of the neck. Now apply downward pressure with the middle of your forearm, and maintain that pressure as you do the technique. Roll your forearm outward as you apply downward pressure and as you gently pull the head away from the point of contact with your other hand. Apply consistent downward pressure as you roll your forearm outward, and stop when you begin to feel bone. By the time you finish rolling, your hand should be open, with your palm facing upward. Repeat this move several times, beginning with a lightly closed fist near the base of the neck. Roll your forearm outward as you open the fingers of your hand while moving the head to an erect position. Always return the head to the collapsed starting position with the heel of your hand before you roll and stretch again.

Because of the relative size of forearms to shoulders, you may need to roll more than once each time to work each shoulder. If you have a small forearm and you're working on a

larger person with broad shoulders, you may not be able to address the entire shoulder with one forearm roll. In this case, begin a new roll where the first one ended by inverting your forearm again, and continue outward until you reach the bone.

When you are finished with one side and you want to work on the other shoulder, move your body position as quickly and gracefully as possible. Switch your knee and half-standing leg to the other side, support his body against your inner leg and abdomen, and place your inverted forearm into position and your hand on his head as quickly as possible. It's helpful to practice this transition over and over again until it can be done quickly and smoothly.

Reminders

- Make sure your forearm rolls flat over the shoulder muscles. Adjust your height to straighten your arm. If your hand is pointing downward toward the mat, it means your body is too high.
- Roll with the fleshy portion of the center of your forearm, not near the wrist or the elbow.
- Lock the receiver's body against yours by leaning it against your half-standing leg and by supporting his back with your abdomen.
- Your leg supports one side of the body while your forearm works on the opposite shoulder. Do not support and work on the same side of the body.
- Remember to apply consistent downward pressure with your forearm as you roll over the shoulder muscle.
- When moving the receiver's head from left to right, only the lightest pressure is needed. Use your fingertips to pull the head away and use the heel of your hand to return it to the collapsed position.
- Switch your body positioning from one side to the other as gracefully and quickly as possible, and use the arm-draping variation (photo below) whenever it seems best.



First bring head toward your forearm. Then pull it away as you compress and rotate.