

# Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation can help you learn about your body and its tension signals.

Edmund Jacobson, MD, developed this particular relaxation technique. He found that you could achieve deep muscle relaxation if you contract a muscle before you relax it.

Jacobson based his technique on a principle of muscle physiology. When you tighten a muscle, then release the tension, the muscle quickly relaxes back to its pre-tensed state.

And if it is allowed to rest, the muscle will become even more relaxed than it previously was.

To practice this method:

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Inhale as you tense a muscle group.
- Hold the tension for five to 10 seconds, then relax and exhale.
- Rest for a few seconds, and notice the contrast between the feelings of tension and relaxation.

Try this technique on a regular basis. Eventually, you should be able to quickly release tension in most areas of your body.

As you work on each muscle group, avoid tensing other groups, especially those that are already relaxed.

1	Fists	Clench right fist, then left, then both.
2	Biceps	Bend elbows, tense biceps.
3	Triceps	Straighten and feel tension along back of arms.
4	Forehead	Wrinkle forehead, frown.
5	Eyes	Close tightly.
6	Jaws	Clench jaw, bite teeth together.
7	Tongue	Press against roof of mouth.
8	Lips	Press together.
9	Neck	Press your head back as far as it will go—roll to right, roll to left, bring head forward to chest.
10	Shoulders	Shrug one, then the other, and then both.
11	Chest	Fill lungs with air, hold, and breathe out.
12	Stomach	Tighten stomach muscles—draw stomach out.
13	Lower back	Arch back, make lower back hollow, feel tension along spine.
14	Buttocks	Flex the muscles, hold.
15	Calves	Press feet and toes downwards, tensing calf muscles.