

Ultimate Guide to Mobility for the Snatch and Overhead Squat

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When I first started crossfit, my snatch and overhead squat was god awful. I somehow managed to qualify for the crossfit regionals in 2010 and when the first event was announced as 21-15-9 overhead squats at 135 and chest to bar pull-ups I was a bit concerned. I was actually 1 of 2 athletes that day receiving a big fat DNF (Did Not Finish) for that event.

Fast track to today I've managed to overhead squat 270 and my snatch continues to improve. It's not the world's biggest life but I've made so much progress over time. Needless to say I had a whole lot of work to do.

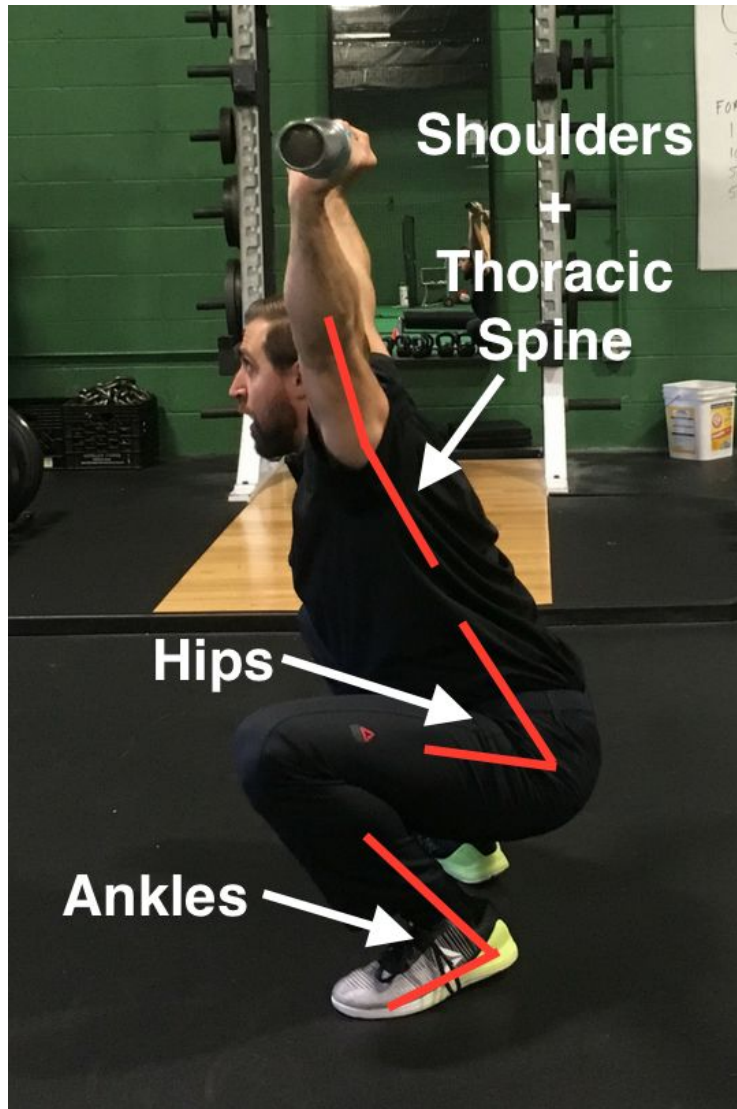
Now, the first and most important aspect of improving your snatch and overhead squat is going to be an understanding of what needs to change in order to make improvements in these lifts. A major component of these lifts (which is different from other lifts) is the extreme amount of mobility required to perform them. The same can't be said about the bench press for example.

Another concept about the snatch and overhead squat to understand is that multiple joints are involved to make the lift occur properly. Not only that, but certain joints and muscles are often more limited than others. Also, there are a lot of differences between people. Some people have a lot of ankle stiffness and no hip mobility problems. Some are the opposite.

Since everyone is so different it's important to assess motion and apply the right mobility prescription. This way we're more efficient with our exercises and people make progress. If we shotgun 20 exercises to everyone we aren't being efficient. If we give 10 hip mobility exercises to someone with great hip mobility but have stiff ankles they won't make progress.

So now that we have that out of the way, what are the major areas that need mobility for the overhead squat? (There are a few extra areas that need help as well but these are the major ones to focus on)

- 1. Thoracic Spine and Shoulders (shoulder flexion and thoracic extension)**
- 2. Hips (flexion)**
- 3. Ankle (dorsiflexion)**



Step 1: Assessment

1. Ankle Dorsiflexion - [Click HERE for assessment](#)
2. Hip Flexion - [Click HERE for assessment](#) (Password InsiderMMME)
3. Thoracic Spine Extension - [Click HERE for assessment](#)
4. Shoulder Flexion - [Click HERE for assessment](#)

After you've assessed your areas of limitation it's time to start intervening. I like to increase mobility utilizing 4 tools:

1. Soft Tissue Mobilization
2. Stretching
3. Eccentrics
4. Reinforcing Movements

Now, there are a lot of ways to build mobility out there right now in the blog-o-sphere. I've got to tell you, as a consumer of information it's a bit of a mess. I get patients coming in doing all sorts of weird things in order to improve their mobility. It's confusing. This is why I like to keep it simple. Three interventions that have been studied to reliably increase range of motion are stretching, foam rolling and eccentrics. We know that these interventions work so we'll focus on them. I like to utilize reinforcing movements afterwards in order to try and implement this new range of motion into our favorite exercises.

Here are my favorite mobility drills for each area:

1: Ankle Dorsiflexion - 3-5 times per week

- [Foam rolling calves](#) 2 x 30 seconds
- [Wall Soleus Stretch](#) x 30 seconds
- [Soleus Eccentric](#) x 5 reps (5 second lower and 5 second pause in bottom)

2: Hip Flexion - 3-5 times per week

- [Foam Roll / Softball Glutes](#) 2 x 30 seconds
- [Foam Roll / Softball Adductors](#) 2 x 30 seconds
- [Posterior Hip Stretch](#) x 30 seconds
- [Adductor Stretch](#) x 30 seconds (hold bottom of rock)
- [Goblet Squat](#) x 5 reps (5 second lower and 5 second pause in bottom)

3: Thoracic Spine Extension and Shoulder Flexion - 3-5 times per week

- [Foam Roll Lats / Teres Major](#) 2 x 30 seconds
- [Stretch Lats / Teres Major](#) x 30 seconds
- [Eccentric Lat Exercise](#) x 5 reps (5 second lower and 5 second pause in bottom)
- [Thoracic Spine Extension over Roller](#) x 10
- [Quadruped Thoracic Extensions](#) x 10

4: Reinforcing Movements - 3-5 times per week

- [Jump to Deep Squat x 5, Toe Touch to Squat x 5](#)
- [Band Overhead Squat Patterning x 5](#)
- Barbell Overhead Squat x 5
- Make sure you utilize all of your ankle, hip, thoracic spine and shoulder range of motion for each drill!

5: Go Train!!

- You need to make sure you use your new range of motion with training now. Now would be a good time to hit some snatches or overhead squats in training.
- A lot of these mobility drills can easily be squeezed in between sets of exercises.

A Note on Sets, Reps, Tempo and Frequency:

The amount of sets, reps and tempos were chosen based on what the available evidence recommends as optimal dosages to increase mobility. Sometimes I find myself pulling my hair out because some new guru recommends a specific amount of sets, reps or time held based on some number they pulled out of a hat. Imagine if your doctor gave you a bottle of pills for an illness with a random recommendation for how often to take the medicine and how many pills to take at a time. That would be ridiculous right? Of course. That's why I give very specific recommendations.

Also keep in mind that some people will need a little more and some a little less as far as mobility goes. Everyone is different and these numbers just serve as a starting point. Make sure you re-assess on regular intervals (objective measurements like a tape measure, goniometer or pictures are best here) to ensure you're making progress. I recommend re-assessing in 4-6 week intervals (because that's what the medical literature shows as generally enough time to make mobility changes).

Well that's it! I wanted this guide to be short, sweet and to the point. I purposefully left out the minutiae because honestly it's 20% of the work that leads to 80% of the progress. Give this a shot and then get back to me and let me know how your progress is!

If you want more great assessments and corrections for your athletes to keep them safe and get them to perform optimally then I would consider joining my [Insiders Online Mentoring Program](#).



[Just as a reminder I'm offering a special trial of \\$1 to get started as a gift for signing up for the newsletter.](#)

It's the logical next step if you want to take your mobility, fitness and rehabilitation game to the next level. Plus you get to ask questions directly through a private facebook group as a member.

See you on the Inside(rs),

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