

Golf: Practice Makes Perfect

If you are serious about your golf practice, you would be well advised to add a large mirror to your equipment. Any old Victorian relic, if large enough, will do, and it matters little if it is cracked. Any second-hand furniture dealer should be able to meet your requirements, and when you have found what you want set it up against the wall of your garage or box-room. Swinging in front of this mirror, you can take stock of your position at different stages of the movement and clarify still more the mental picture of the shaped swing you are creating. So now to the practice ground, with a bag of balls, at least a dozen. First of all you must decide your practice objective. It is useless to walk out on to the grass and blaze away with abandon, hitting ball after ball vaguely into the blue. There must be a defined purpose behind every swing you make. Never hit your practice shots diagonally from the right edge of the fairway over to the left. Play along a defined line to a defined target, aiming to group as many balls as possible in a restricted area. Hitting diagonally across a practice ground or fairway leaves you open to a dangerous tendency which is difficult to describe in terms which the inexperienced will readily appreciate. But you can take my word for it. Briefly what happens is this. As you play ball after ball the set of the shot played across a defined line will eventually lead to the body turning across from the shoulders with a resultant distortion of the club-line. Maintenance of the club-line is the whole object of the shaped golf swing, and to facilitate this you must hit parallel to the defined line of the practice ground or fairway. The beginner will find that a useful additional aid to this is the placing of a spare club outside the ball and parallel to the line. If, through lack of a practice ground, you have to practice on the course, as good a spot as any to choose is one of the mown paths cut from the tee through the rough. Playing straight down the path you will have a clearly defined line, and you will be doing no damage to the playing area. Commence your practice by playing short pitches with the wedge. Then proceed to the eight or seven and into the medium irons and then into the bigger clubs. Always come into that relaxed finish from which you can check on the position of the club-face. If you find yourself playing a wooden club or a long iron poorly, don't persist with the club. Discard it temporarily and turn to one of the medium irons and work at the delivery. Then try again with the club which was giving you difficulty. I would warn you against one of the most common errors into which your practice will lead unless you take care to avoid it. Resist the temptation to reel off one shot after another in quick-fire style. You are not operating a machine-gun set on fixed lines. You have in your hand a golf club, not a machine, and as you hit ball after ball in practice the danger is that your swing, without your realizing it, will become faster and faster with destructive results to the timing. This brings us back yet again to the essential need to keep your swing smooth and unhurried at all times. Take your time between each shot and relax a full minute or even more between each half-dozen shots. One more warning to note in working out your practice routine. Never flog yourself into a state of exhaustion. Forcing your limbs and muscles to carry on under the strain of fatigue is sheer misplaced enthusiasm, more harmful than beneficial. A little and often is preferable to driving yourself on to your knees in one long prolonged bout. Pack up when you feel the first signs of weariness. Regular practice in this manner should not fail to make you a better golfer. Good luck!

About the Author

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