



EFFECTIVE PRACTICE MINDSET

THERE is no place for sloppy practice in golf. Whatever you are practising is sending the message to your brain that "this is what I want to become habitual in my swing". This isn't a selective process; each repetition further ingrains the swing pattern.

There is abundant scientific evidence to support the development of neural

pathways with every repetition of a golf swing. The brain is learning to remember the pattern so it can be repeated without lots of conscious thought. The more golf swings you make, the better your brain remembers the pattern. With continued practice, the neural pathways become even stronger and soon that swing pattern becomes automatic. This is learning efficiency and occurs with everything we learn.

Knowing this, how should you go about practising so that your time is spent efficiently and for the benefit of your golf?

The usual pattern with players making improvements to their swings is that they will listen to the instruction, make some practice swings or drill movements then hit a shot. If they immediately play a second shot without reinforcing the swing pattern with further practice swings or drills there is usually an immediate drop in quality. With each successive shot there is a further deterioration and the swing reverts to being closer to the original swing pattern than the improved pattern.

There is a better way for those improvements to stick. During the initial stages of learning a new element of your swing, make three or four drill movements or practice swings for every shot you hit. Reduce the number of practices before hitting a shot only as you get used to the new pattern.

This doesn't actually take all



that long, but is critical to allowing your brain to become familiar with the new pattern.

If you are practising after school or work, the temptation to hit a bucket of balls quickly in the limited time you have available means quality goes out the window. If you do this your brain is still learning a pattern, but probably not the one you want to take to the golf course as you attempt to lower your handicap.

Any time you are practising, alternate making practice swings, doing drills (pictured above) and hitting shots. When you are beginning to hit full shots in your practice session, and you have recently had a lesson, then make three practice swings for every shot hit. Do this three times. Then make two practice swings for every shot you hit; do this three times. Finally, make one practice swing for each shot. This will bring a greater awareness to your practice and lead to much more rapid improvement. ●

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