

GSA Road to Mastery - Planning your training focus

Step 1: Identify your swing pattern??

3 Factors

1. Club Path? (outside-in, inside-out, shallow, steep, etc)
2. Power Source? (Legs, core, shoulders/arms, forearms, cast vs loaded, etc)
3. Club Face? (Look at top of backswing and release. Do you close the face starting early in transition or late in release? How do you close the face (with the shaft rotation in-plane shaft movement)?

Your swing pattern reveals your:

- ball flight pattern (fade, draw, straight)
- feared misses (tops, shanks, slices, pulls, hooks, etc)
- favorite shots (driver, wedges, bunkers, short rough)

Note: Usually you will find you have the same swing pattern through the bag, but it is possible to have a distinct swing pattern for your long game, mid game, and/or short game.

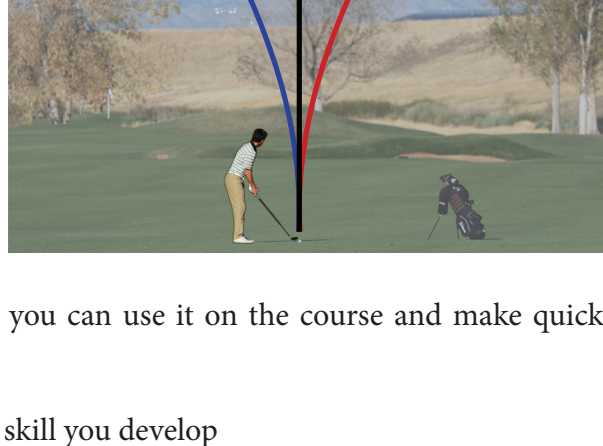
You are consistent – find your pattern!

Know your pattern? Skip Step 1 and move on to Step 2: Train your pattern

3 ways to identify your pattern

1 - Read Objective Results (most beneficial way)

- Contact with the ball
- Contact with the ground
- Ball Flight
 - Curve
 - Starting Direction
 - Height
- What are your Misses?
- What are your Strengths?
- What shot do you most fear?



If you can identify your pattern by reading feedback, then you can use it on the course and make quick corrections to save the day.

Properly reading feedback could be the most important golf skill you develop

2 - Take Inventory with or without the Decoder

Hit with different clubs to identify the essence of your pattern - your power sources, your club head path tendencies, and your face preferences. The Decoder is a form you can use to take inventory and look at patterns.

3 - With Technology

Analyze a video of your swing. Look at steeps and shallows, power sources, and club face positions (if camera is fast enough)

Goal for Step One – Identify your pattern

Note: Swing patterns generally create success in one area and struggles in another. Another key reason for training how to read feedback accurately.

Know your pattern? Start Training!

Step 2: How to train?

First step – decide your short-term goal

Own your pattern (MAXIMIZE SHORT TERM SCORING)?

Balance your pattern (TRAIN IT FOR LONG TERM IMPROVEMENT)?

1. Do you need to play well right now or next month? Do you have reasonable time to make the change?
2. How much ENERGY and PATIENCE do you have to endure a change? Mentally, are you ready to
3. make a change?
4. Do you have a clear outline for your change? What do you need to do first? What do you need to do second? How will you know when you're done? What problems can you foresee?



Note: Revisit the flow chart from time-to-time refocusing on learning or performance. Once a season is a reasonable goal.

A simple practice outline - Progressive Challenges vs Boring Repetition

1. Carefully select a task to work on.
2. Train the task.
3. Then progressively challenge that task with games and tests.

After testing decide what to do next.

Work on the same skill again?

Refine it (add a small secondary piece)?

Focus on another area completely?

Your goal is to put in enough reps to make the task automatic

“Good shots better, bad shots weird, but in a predictable way”

Great! You have a current goal of MAXIMIZING or IMPROVING

Next Step 3: Lay out a short-term practice plan

Step 3: Short term practice plan

When under pressure, your swing is going to do what is ingrained, not what you know it should.

Practice with planned challenges. Hitting solid shots feels great, but deep learning is a result of struggling. Aim for practice that pushes your skill to the edge of your ability.

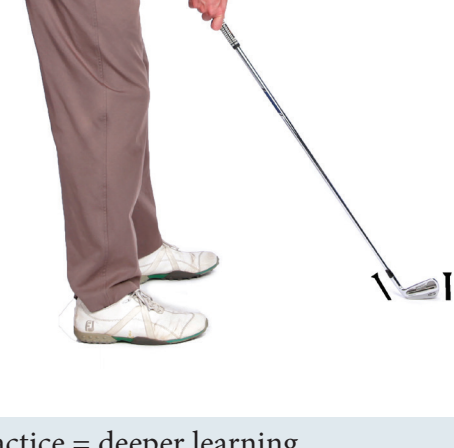
Types of Practice

Blocked Same shot over and over – feedback can be feel, rhythm, or visuals (example: hitting 7 irons repeatedly)

Random Varying objective for each shot (example: hit a driver, then an iron)

Games Reps with consequence (example: can you hit a draw to a target then a fade to a different target for score)

Tests Reps with consequence and pressure (example: playing a round of golf)



Key Note: Blocked practice = performance gains, Random practice = deeper learning. Avoid spending more than 50% of your practice balls blocked training. Using random practice, games, and tests will likely give you more transfer to the on-course environment.

Blocked Practice WARNING – Blocked style is very good for new golfers, or trying a new movement (use it for the first 100 balls trying new major move). Otherwise, do not fall in love with the comfort of blocked practice!

Sample Practice Sequence for Owning your Swing Pattern (MAXIMIZING)

A sample plan for a golfer with an outside-in path ...

Physical Warm Up Get blood flowing and warm up the ligaments before your practice session.

Blocked 10 minutes - Use the 4-square drill. Observe your path and low point with a 6 iron (use external focus). Observe your natural ball flight. Focus on small changes (like set up or tempo)

Random 10 minutes– Use 4 different clubs alternating each swing. A full pre-shot routine for each shot. Focus on tempo and rhythm.

Games 10 minutes - Play a game like “3 in a Row”. Hit 3 shots with 5 clubs using your full pre-shot routine. Evaluate the quality of your PROCESS for each shot on a birdie/par/bogie scale. Try to finish under par.

Tests 10 minutes balls - Play nine holes (either on the course or on the range). Full pre-shot routine. Score based on quality of process.

Sample Practice Sequence for Training your Swing Pattern (IMPROVING)

Here's a sample plan for improving the outside in path...

Physical Warm Up Get blood flowing and warm up the ligaments before your practice session

Blocked 15 minutes - Drill circuit with Jackson 5 in between shots and motorcycle pump over the ball

Random 5 minutes - Hit shots with pre-shot routine, alternating targets and clubs but hitting one ball flight

Games 10 minutes - Big hook. Visualize a fairway, your job is to start it right of the fairway, and finish it left of it, and 0 if it hits the fairway (wide fairway, or bogey, or birdie for the irons).

Score Birdie if you do it, and 0 if it hits the fairway, or bogey if it finishes right of the fairway or starts in the fairway. Try to finish the game under par.

Tests 10 minutes Play nine holes (either on the course or on the range). If on the range, wait at least 1 minute in between shots (longer waits are better).

Note: This focusses on the full swing, but your program should work on improving your weaknesses and maintaining your strengths. Do not neglect short game and trouble shot practice.

Great! Now you have a short-term practice plan. If you want to plan your year, go to Step 4: How to lay out a practice calendar

(optional) Step 4: Do you have a long-term practice plan???

A long-term plan helps answer questions.

What should I be working on?

Is this the best time to work on this?

How do I make sure I'm working on all aspects of my game?

General Guidelines

- It is mentally challenging to always be making major changes to your swing. It is almost always better to cycle your focus – work on balancing your pattern for a few months, then work on ownership for a while.
- Budget at least 3 weeks to change a major movement.
- Do not start working on a new major movement one week before an important round...instead choose 1 or 2 minor things (such as ball position, or tempo) or focus on an area that has worked in the past.
- Increase use of pre-shot routine as you get close to an event. 1 week before, aim for full pre shot routine on every shot.

Sample Month Before Important Event

Situation – Improve outside-in swing path on full swing

Weeks 1 and 2 - Aim for 3 practices each- Focus on big movements for path with full swing. As you gain proficiency, challenge yourself with more random practice and games. If you continue to struggle, use a different style of feedback (instead of feel, try visual. Instead of visual, try a spatial awareness drill).

Week 3 – Use pre-shot routine on most shots. Take more time between shots and use on course focus and intensity. Try to incorporate any drills into a simple pre-shot routine thought. Practice on the course if possible.

Week 4 - Event week – Cut down blocked practice significantly. On every swing, use full pre-shot, and post-shot, routine. All tweaks should be minor simple changes. For instance, refine your swing with ball position, tempo (intensity), or thoughts of a smooth finish (balance). Practice on course if possible.

Sample Year - Overview (assuming season from April to August)

January - April

Goal is to find 3-5 key drills. These drills will be useful in season to regain mechanics if your game slumps temporarily.

Full swing - work on downswing - transition and release major movements – backswing or set up only if they impede your downswing goals

Short Game - Work on major movements for finesse wedge, putting, bunker (not covered in this book but an important section on the website)

April - August

Full Swing - Focus on set up, tempo, controlling your misses, and any swing areas that were key to earlier success. Only introduce new major movements if score is not your main short term goal.

Find go-to swing thoughts that work for you – Usually either posture, tempo, and one of YOUR keys will help you to play well.

Use lots of external focus – brushing the ground is a great focus for many golfers

Short Game - Learn/explore new shots at any time, but don't try it on the course until it can hold up to tests/games during practice.

September - November

The fall is the best time for making major changes. Your season is fresh in your mind, and you have a vivid set of data to identify your misses and worst shots. You will have enough days to practice on the course, but will also have less pressure to seek instant gratification from a technical change.

December – Put the clubs down and focus on your fitness level.

Note: How many reps will it take to feel comfortable (it's a common question)

100/200/500/1,000/5,000 ?

When it comes to training, there are no guaranteed timelines. A simple change, like a ball position change, may only take 100 (or less). A bigger change can take longer to feel automatic (don't worry, even if it's not automatic, your results may improve after only 100 balls!)

If you have put in 200 reps, or 3 sessions, and haven't seen BIG improvements, either you are missing a key detail (a great time to ask a question on the website!) or you have not picked the right key movement.

Final notes – Your end goal

Your goal is to identify THE 4 or 5 keys to your game. No more than you can fit on an index card. Your goal is also to have a set of drills that gets your swing in game shape quickly.

Important! A key is not a swing thought. It is an actual concept. Examples of good keys are: when I complete my turn. When I swing in rhythm. When I shallow the arms. When I stay behind the ball.

If you hit it well, you hit all your keys! If you hit a bad shot, you missed one (or more) of your keys.

Reading your misses like a detective will accelerate identifying, and reinforcing, your keys.

Building a good pre-shot and post-shot routine will help you manage your golf game more consistently.