



# Practice Like You Play

**D**o you grapple with taking what you learned on the range and translating that to the course? Most amateur golfers commonly struggle to be able to implement the necessary skills learned

on the range and use those learned skills on the course. Here are a few ways you can improve your practice routine that make playing golf more enjoyable. In this lesson segment we are going to talk about how to practice and mentally prepare yourself for the round to come.



First, we need to develop a pre-shot routine to help you mentally envision your shot outcome. Now, each person is going to have a different pre-shot routine, and that's OK. Whether you have one practice swing or are a person that has a trigger to help them start your swing, both are alright. What I like to teach my students comes from a book that every golfer should read at some

point. The book is titled *Every Shot Must Have a Purpose*, written by Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriot. In this book, Nilsson and Marriot refer to a "think box" and a "play box," and how those boxes help a golfer slow down their thinking and help envision their success.

Picture a large box behind your golf ball and a box that is where you will be executing the shot. The box behind the ball is called the "think box". This box is where you do all your decision making and assessments of the shot before you go and hit it. In the "think box," I like to see the shot shape that is required, determining the wind, and picking the proper club for that yardage. Once you have done all that, then it's time to cross over into the "play box."

The "play box" is designed to help the golfer learn to commit to what he or she has decided on and stick to those decisions. How often do you stand over the ball and question either the club you have in your hand, or are you set up in the right direction? If it is a few times a round, then you are losing valuable shots due to poor commitment and need a solidified pre-shot routine. Once you are in the "play box" the only thing you should be thinking about is ... *nothing*. In the "play box," your job is to trust what you have done to prepare yourself to perform at your best.

While on the range, you can implement your own pre-shot routine. You need to start out by finding a routine that does not take up much time and is repeatable. This routine is going to help you calm your nerves and help with executing your shot. Reading *Every Shot Must Have a Purpose* will help you mentally focus your mind and will allow you to get out of your own way. Remember, that routine needs to be quick and repeatable to be effective.

Here is an example of what I do on the range to help with practicing my pre-shot routine. When I am getting ready for a round, I like to practice my pre-shot routine. First, I determine what it is I am aiming for and the yardage I



need to carry. Second, I pick the club that is going to produce that carry number and pick the shot shape that is needed to yield the desired outcome. Once I have done all that I step into the "play box" and trust that all the decisions I have made in the "think box" are correct. I then commit to those decisions and execute the shot. By practicing your pre-shot routine on the range, it will become easier when you get out to the course. Practice how you play and remember to practice with a purpose. And, be sure to contact your local PGA Professional if you are having any difficulties determining your practice routine.

Andrew Ogata is the Golf Professional at Arrowhead Golf Club.