How to Practice

“Practice doesn’t make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect.” – Vince Lombardi



This is taken from the book, *The Game Before the Game*. I think it outlines perfectly what should make up your practice.

Range Practice

* Develop a routine. Use your routine every time you practice on the range.
	+ Your routine should include a “think box” and a “play box”. You do all of your practice swings, shot planning, and choosing a target in the “think box”. Once that is done, you step into your “play box” to hit your shot.
	+ Before each shot, you need to visualize the shot you are trying to hit. Questions to ask yourself: Where will this land? What type of shot am I trying to hit? What is my goal for this shot? How high will it go?
* Pay attention to the shots you are hitting on the range.
	+ Where do you usually miss? Right? Left? Short?
	+ How high do each of your clubs go?
	+ How far do each of your clubs go?
* Practice specialty shots on the range. These shots are crucial for being able to get yourself out of trouble on the golf course.
	+ Punch outs
	+ Knock downs
	+ High shots/low shots
* Work on creativity with your shots – this will give you more options when you are on the course.
	+ 100-yard drill: hit every club in your bag to the 100-yard marker on the range
* Use drills on the range to create pressure. Set a goal for yourself, and don’t leave the range or move on until you reach your goal. For example:
	+ Hit two good shots in a row with each club.
	+ More advanced players: 9 shot drill – hit each of the nine shots with the same club before moving on (low draw/straight/fade, medium draw/straight/fade, high draw/straight/fade)
* Know your golf swing and know how to fix it.
	+ Take notes after you get a lesson or help from a coach. Put those notes in your bag so you have them if things start to go south on the course.

Green Practice

* Develop a putting routine. Use your routine for each putt you hit on the green.
	+ Your routine should include a “think box” and a “play box”. You do all of your practice strokes, read the green, and choose a target line in the “think box”. Once that is done, you step into your “play box” to hit your putt.
	+ Before each putt, you need to visualize what your ball is going to do. Questions to ask yourself: Does the green break? How much? It is uphill/downhill? How hard do I need to hit this? What will it look like when my ball goes in the hole? What side of the hole will it go in on? Do I need to fix any ball marks or remove anything that is in my way?
* In addition to developing a putting routine, develop a chipping routine. Use your routine for every chip shot you hit around the green.
	+ Your routine should include a “think box” and a “play box”. You do all of your practice swings, read the green, and choose a target in the “think box”. Once that is done, you step into your “play box” to hit your chip.
	+ Before each chip, you need to visualize what your ball is going to do. Questions to ask yourself: Does the green break? How much? It is uphill/downhill? How hard do I need to hit this? Where do I want to land my chip? How much will my club roll out? What will it look like when my ball goes in the hole? What side of the hole will it go in on? Do I want the flag taken out or left in?
	+ It is very helpful to pick out the exact spot where you want your ball to land. Picking a small landing zone and focusing on that will help minimize your misses.
* Practice the hard shots around the green.
	+ Bad lies
	+ Plugged bunker shots
	+ Feet in the bunker, but the ball isn’t/ ball is in the bunker, but your feet aren’t
* Use drills to create pressure. This will help you get used to performing well under pressure. We will have several drills that we do in practice on a regular basis. These are great drills to use when you practice on your own. If you would like more drills, see Coach Lauren. She has enough drills to keep you busy for the rest of forever.

Course Practice

* Use your routines every time you step on the course to play. Even if it is just a round with your family/friends, you need to get into the habit of using your routine for every shot.
	+ You should be visualizing every shot before you hit it.
	+ Practice choosing small targets. It is not always best to aim at the flag or down the middle of the fairway. Think through each shot and all of your options.
* As you practice your routine, try to make it as efficient as possible.
	+ Watch pro golf. Focus on your favorite player’s routine. What do they do? Where do they keep their ball/tees/scorecard?
	+ Minimize extra movements. Know where all of your things are. Always keep things in the same spot (ball, tees, glove, etc.)
	+ If I timed you on your first shot of the day and your last shot of the day from the fairway, the times should be very similar. The best players have very consistent and efficient routines.
* Practice good course management. If you get into trouble, your #1 priority is to get out. Take a stroke to get your ball back into play, and rely on your short game to save your score for the hole.
* Keep real score every time you play.
* Play games against the people you are playing with. Make the games fair, so everyone has a chance to be successful. For example:
	+ Bingo Bango Bongo
	+ Snake

Brain Practice

* Read golf books. They help, I promise. Also, reading is good for your brain. Turn off the TV, put away your phone, and read a book. Here are some suggestions.
	+ Golf is Not a Game of Perfect – Bob Rotella
	+ Putting Out of Your Mind – Bob Rotella
	+ The Golf of Your Dreams – Bob Rotella
	+ Golf is a Game of Confidence – Bob Rotella
	+ Every Shot Must Have a Purpose – Pia Nilsson & Lynn Marriott
	+ The Game Before the Game – Pia Nilsson & Lynn Marriott
	+ What to Say When You Talk to Yourself – Shad Helmsetter
	+ Basically any book by Bob Rotella/ Pia Nilsson & Lynn Marriott would be helpful. I have not read them all, but I have read most of them. They are outstanding golf authors. If you would like more book suggestions, talk to Coach Lauren.
* Watch pro golf. They know what they are doing. If you do things that they don’t do, you should probably stop.

Keys for Success in Tournaments

* Set goals for yourself. Goals that aren’t related to score are very effective. For example:
	+ I am going to hit \_\_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_\_ fairways (par 3s don’t count).
	+ I am going to hit \_\_\_\_\_ out of 18 greens in regulation.
	+ I am going to have a two-putt or better on every hole.
* Sometimes it is nice to break your goals up into smaller chunks. This helps you feel more successful during your round when you achieve them, and it helps because you can move on quickly to a new goal if you didn’t achieve the last one. For example:
	+ Break the course up into chunks of three holes each. Set a goal that you try to achieve on each three-hole chunk.
		- I am going to hit all three greens in regulation on the next three holes.
		- I am going to hit all three fairways on the next three holes.
* Be aware of your tendencies under pressure. Most people speed up their routines when they get nervous of flustered. Pay attention to your speed, and try to keep it consistent under all conditions.
* The night before a tournament, if used effectively, can be very beneficial. Here are a few things you can do that can make a difference in your round the next day:
	+ If you have played the course before or if the course has pictures of the holes on their website, play through the course in your mind. Visualize your shots for every hole. See yourself making putts and finishing out every hole. Be realistic and optimistic. Especially focus on the first tee shot if you know which hole you will be starting on. This will help minimize nerves the next day. Often times, first round scores are higher than second round scores because players are nervous. If you can work through your entire round the night before, the actual first round will feel more comfortable.
	+ Mark all of your golf balls, clean out your bag, make sure you have everything you need for the next day. This will help eliminate some of the tasks you would need to complete during your warm-up time, giving you more time to focus and relax before your round.
	+ Make notes to help yourself. If you have a swing thought that has been working or a swing fix, write it down. Even if you think you will remember it, the brain does funny things when it gets nervous. It is helpful to have it written down and in your bag, just in case.
	+ If you have a yardage book or course notes, give it to someone you love or trust to write positive notes in. I used to give my books to Connor or a teammate the night before. They can write tips, positive things, jokes, or anything to keep your mind positive and help keep you in the right mindset. I know it sounds cheesy, but it can be very helpful, especially if you are someone who tends to get lost in your own little world on the course.
* When you are playing a new course in a tournament, look at the surrounding holes as you pass them. You often pass holes before you play them. You can get a good look at greens, fairways, and obstacles as you play other holes.
* Be sure you have snacks and drinks for the course, and be sure you eat them. Even if you don’t feel hungry or thirsty, you are. High school rounds can be very long. Your body will not function at its best if you don’t eat and drink properly.

Come see Coach Lauren if you have any questions about how to practice! You all have incredible potential, and I want to see you become the best golfers you can be. I am here to help you!

