

Dress Rehearsal

Here's how to make your practice swing both meaningful and effective.

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Most golfers take a practice swing (or two) because they think they should, without giving much thought as to why they do it. But your practice swing should always serve a purpose. If it doesn't, then you ought to drop it from your preshot routine. (Besides, if you take two meaningless swings before every shot, you risk wearing yourself out over 18 holes.)

Hold your finish for three seconds when taking a practice swing.

Never try and make a perfect practice swing, because should you stick the clubhead in the ground, you'll be much less confident over your actual swing. The practice swing should effect a positive change in your game or state of mind. For example, if you're working on something technical – like a full shoulder turn or smooth takeaway – rehearse that position or idea.

Struggling with your timing? Take a practice swing with your eyes closed; this will help you gain a better awareness of your swing's tempo: Is it too fast or is it just right? Keep your preparation before each shot simple and effective. We encourage many of our students to swing to a full finish and hold the pose for three seconds. This promotes good balance, which is essential to making solid contact.

There's no rule in golf that says you have to take a practice swing, but every swing must have a purpose. Make sure you're

focused on the shot at hand and on your intended target, and then swing away.