

# the pre-shot routine

CREATING CONSISTENCY IN YOUR GAME!



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**Professional golfers are far less sporadic than the average golfer with their shot results. It is no coincidence that most, if not all professional golfers follow a pre-shot routine prior to the execution of each shot.**

A pre-shot routine works by preparing the golfer both physically and mentally to reproduce on the course the swing motions and rhythms they have developed and grooved in practice sessions. Using a pre-shot routine ensures that the sequence of events leading up to each shot are consistent. A consistent approach is likely to lead to a consistent outcome! Conversely, a lack of uniformity prior to a shot, or within a pre-shot routine itself, can lead to a lack of constancy in the swing and mindset and consequently the outcome.

The average golfer will typically not exercise the discipline required of a pre-shot routine despite the fact that they could experience huge gains if they adopted and rehearsed a regular and consistent approach to their play.

## What is a Pre-shot Routine?

A pre-shot routine is a set pattern of rhythmic and repeatable cue actions that are employed prior to hitting each shot. The pre-shot routine is an individual way of gaining consistency when preparing to take a shot.

## How Does a Pre-shot Routine Work?

Establishing and practising a pre-shot routine will work to accustom your mind and body to the swing motions and rhythms you develop and engrain in your practice sessions. Through repetition and practice the pre-shot routine you use transfers to your sub-conscious where it becomes stored as a habit that you can utilise on the course.

## What Are The Benefits Of Using A Pre-shot Routine?

A pre-shot routine will take your focus away from irrelevant external and internal distractions by forcing you to focus on the shot at hand, whatever the circumstances. By following a routine, none of the vital components of proficient skill execution are excluded. A pre-shot routine will increase your trust and confidence in your shot by providing a sense of familiarity and security.

## How Do You Develop a Sound Pre-Shot Routine?

The 'four phase' pre-shot routine framework outlined below should serve as a guide only. There is no such thing as an 'ideal' pre-shot routine. We are all unique and have our own style and preferences therefore every person's pre-shot routine will be different. You will need to work hard at developing and personalising a pre-shot routine that suits you. You may experience an initial decline in performance whilst you develop your routine.

To reap the benefits of a routine you will need to invest patience, commitment and time into it. The best routines are short and simple.

There are four key phases you can consider when developing your pre-shot routine:

- TRIGGER
- PLAN
- PREPARE
- EXECUTE

**Trigger** - You could begin your routine with a triggering signal or cue to prompt yourself that your pre-shot routine has started and it is time to centre your attention on it. You can use a physical, verbal or visual cue or alternatively a combination of cues to direct your attention to the start of your pre-shot routine.

### Example Physical Cues -

Put on your glove. Adjust the Velcro on your glove. Take a deep breath. Pinch your ear.

**Example Verbal Cues** - Say a cue word / phrase that means something to you e.g. "Let's go", "This is my time", "Ready", "Come on [INSERT SURNAME]!"

**Example Visual Cues** - Visualising a bright blue box to step into. Focusing on the wording on your bag. Visualising a thick, glowing, gold line to step over.

In the trigger phase you should strive towards feeling that you are stepping into your own, personal vacuum or bubble – a private space or world where nothing can intrude on your focus. NB: You may find that you do not need to engage in the trigger phase at all. You may be the type of player who naturally finds focus at the 'Plan' stage.

**Plan** - This phase begins when you arrive at your ball and ends when you select your club. You will need to consider the following variables to select the appropriate club:

- Gauge the distance** - to the pin or a pre-determined target.
- Ball flight** - to identify what trajectory will work best
- Wind** - to identify how strong it is and in what direction
- Lie of the ball** - to identify whether there are any compensations you will need to make

Gauging these variables to assess how they influence your club selection can be straightforward, sometimes it isn't! The most important factor to take on board here is that you are decisive. You must believe and trust that you have selected the most appropriate club. If you are unsure or unconvinced that you have selected the right club it is unlikely you will execute a confident and trusting shot.

**Prepare** - You could engage in all or some of the following process:

#### **Grip your club**

**Pick Target** - It is vital that the target you choose is small and specific.

**Adjust if unusual or unfavourable lie** - i.e. If the ball is on a down slope, up slope etc align yourself next to it and take a couple of practice swings to establish the adaptations you will have to make to deal with the lie of the ball i.e. the tilt of the shoulders, direction of the hips.

**Visualise** - You may wish to visualise the flight of the ball and picture it landing and stopping at the target. You may want to visualise the swing. The vision in your mind can work to gently stimulate the nerves and muscles you would use to physically execute the type of swing you are visualising. Visualising will help pre-program your subconscious into producing the shot required. Visualising helps your sub-conscious take over. However, it is not necessary to visualise. More importantly it is vital that you believe the ball is going to the target.

**Intermediate Target** - You may find it useful to pinpoint an intermediate target a few feet in front of the ball to 'cue in'.

**Practice Swing** - You may want to take a practice swing. When, how many etc. is up to you. If you use your practice swing incorrectly you can unsettle your routine so be aware of the pitfalls of practice swings:

- Do not get fixated on executing a precise number of practice swings prior to each shot. If your last practice swing just doesn't feel right take another one. Make sure you feel comfortable with the last practice swing you take.
- Many golfers remind themselves of technical instructions as they take their practice swings. It is a challenge to expel those thoughts but you can train yourself to focus on the target. Save mechanical thoughts for when you are in your training mode in practice. On the course it is essential that you adopt a trusting mode of thought. If you have a tendency to think about mechanics, take at least two practice swings. The first practice swing can be in the technical mode, where you allow yourself to think about the mechanics. When you are comfortable with the mechanics take an additional practice swing in the trusting mode focusing only on the target and rhythm. You will need to practice switching between the training and trusting modes in your practice sessions.

**Swing thought** - You may or may not use a swing thought. If you do have a swing thought it is recommended that you have just one swing thought per round. Shifting between swing thoughts can be very distracting. Keep it simple. Ensure your swing thought represents an uncomplicated process or motion e.g. "Smooth and slow"; "Target". A trigger word can clear your mind by stopping other thoughts and also provide you with a rhythm.

**Check your alignment, posture and grip feel comfortable.**

**Give your pre-shot routine a chance to become a habit and do the job it is designed to do.**

**In highly charged situations your pre-shot routine will turn the scenario into what the term suggests – a routine!**

**Execute** - Look at the target, look at the ball, swing: This steady rhythm or tempo will help prevent unwanted thoughts and distractions from invading your mind. You will need to experiment. Find a tempo that suits you.

**Conclusion** - Give your pre-shot routine a chance to become a habit and do the job it is designed to do. In highly charged situations your pre-shot routine will turn the scenario into what the term suggests - a routine!

To identify your problems on the golf course and work out effective strategies to improve your game or attitude contact:

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