



Play Collegiate Golf

"creating academic and athletic success"

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Simulate Playing Environment to Keep Sharp Around the Greens

College Coaches Look for Players Who Can Score and Keep Rounds Together With Solid Short Games

Setting your practice routines so that they most closely resemble your playing environment should be the goal of any competitive golfer. Having a structure that looks and feels like what you will encounter on the golf course will help your practice time and skills more easily transfer from the facility to on-course situations. Also, the confidence gained through these practice sessions will help you score well on the golf course and stabilize scores when you are not hitting the ball as well as you would have hoped.

In reality, there are two different types of practice: practice to develop *mechanics* and practice to develop *feel*. Work on your mechanics to build your swing structure with an everyday goal of producing a repetitive motion that will hold up under game time pressure. When you are not working on mechanics, though, your practice should be directed towards developing feel that can help you when you are chipping and putting around the greens on the course. Several practice routines are suggested in this article to help you produce feel around the greens. Challenge yourself and bring your friends along to compete against each other at the practice facility instead of just hitting balls on the range all afternoon. Practice realistically to play better on the course!

Putting Practice

Focus on a Small Target

Putt to a tee or a penny instead of a hole and attempt to “die” the ball at the mark as if it were to just topple over the front edge of the hole if it was there. Golf shops sell devices that fit inside regulation holes that shrinks the circumference of the hole. The goal with this practice routine is to narrow your focus so that when you are approached with a putt on a green the hole looks quite large and the putt may be less intimidating.

Five Points

Place five balls at 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 feet from the hole. Do this at five different points from the hole in a star pattern. This will give you putts from every angle possible (uphill, downhill, side hill with left/right breaks). Start with the first line of putts and make them all. If you miss one, set-up the game again with the goal of making 25 putts in a row. As you near the final few putts, the pressure will mount and will replicate the feelings of competition. And, the confidence this practice game will bring over short putts in competition will be quite noticeable.

Drawback

Simulate a playing environment on the practice putting green. Putt one ball to a hole, simulating an on-course putting environment. If you don't make the putt, move the ball one putter length away from the hole and try to make that putt. Continue this until you have made the putt and completed that “hole.” Choose another hole and repeat this process. This game makes you focus on holing putts and is a favorite of tour players because it simulates competition so well. Find a friend and play this game to sharpen your mental game as well as practice to simulate an on-course environment.

Chipping/Pitching Games

Tee Game

Place four tees around a hole on the chipping green making a square pattern. Put five balls at five different “stations” around the green replicating different on course shots: tight lies, deep rough, down hill, pitch/run, etc. Hit the first five shots with the goal of getting them inside the teeing area. Finish each sequence by making the putts. The goal is 25 up-and-downs. This game will allow you to create some statistics from each practice session for focused improvement and it simulates an on-course competitive environment!

Tee Game #2

Place five tees in a row about three feet apart, creating a line of tees about 15 feet long. Place five balls off the green and chip one ball to each tee. This practice routine accomplishes three things. First, your focus will be narrowed to a small object on the green. Second, with each shot to a new location, you must re-focus your preparation routine to hit a shot to a different location. Third, this game will hone your distance control with your chipping and introduce the concept of different types of trajectories for different types of chips.

In your practice, don't find yourself hitting ball after ball with little or no purpose as this does not simulate any type of on-course experience. When you practice to develop mechanics, make sure each ball hit counts for something. You are trying to build a positive, repetitive motion that will ensure success on the golf course under tournament pressure. When you are practicing to develop feel, make sure you are creating an environment that best simulates on-course environments and tournament conditions. This can be done with more focused, intense learning which is why the suggested practice games in this article use a small number of golf balls, and you don't see a discussion about hitting 100 or more shots at each station! You won't get 100 chances at every chip or putt on the golf course so why prepare for a tournament in that manner?

Good luck!

Dr. Fleming

Dr. Bruce Fleming is the founder of Play Collegiate Golf, created to mentor young women and men interested in continuing their competitive golf careers at institutions that support their academic, athletic, and personal goals.

For more information please visit playcollegiategolf.com

Attend a Career Fair in Your First Year at College

College Survival Tip



When you get on campus, go directly to the Career Center and see what options are available for first year students. Internships, résumé workshops, and career fairs are all valuable experiences and these learning opportunities should be taken advantage of early on in the scholastic career. Many first year students don't attend a Career Fair and most don't see the value in it, unfortunately. I always built this into my First Year Experience classes as an integral component to success for *all* four years. My thinking was that getting first year students to experience the Career Fair without the added pressure of actually getting a job would be beneficial to when it actually counted! Also, many companies attending these fairs have internships and summer job opportunities. Find out when your school Career Fair is (Tip: They usually will have one each semester!) and go to it without the pressure to perform! College is all about experiential learning and this is just one more chance!