

Practice like the Pros to Build Confidence

By Jackie Cannizzo and Dr. Rick Jensen

Which comes first, confidence or success? It is a common question. Many believe that you need confidence for success, but if so, how do you develop confidence? *How do the pros do it?*

In our experience training and coaching professional and amateur golfers of all ages and skill levels, the answer we have found is to *start small*. Build lots of small successes and you will build confidence.

To build success in golf, start with a disciplined approach to practice, which includes: 1) specific and achievable goals for each practice session 2) regular, scheduled practice 3) feedback from your coach 4) repeating the same motion thousands of times.

Start with putting. To become a better putter, create a realistic goal and practice schedule. Next, pick a drill and set a goal. For example, try to make 10 four-foot putts in a row, without a miss. If you miss one, start the drill all over. If you can only make seven or eight in a row, then the next day set your goal to improve on that number. Stick with it until you reach your goal of 10 putts in a row and you will have your first small success. Get feedback from your coach if you have difficulty reaching your goal. After several weeks of this kind of disciplined practice, you will be able to make 50 four-foot putts in a row, without a miss! This is what gives you confidence when playing on the course and leads to your success.

Apply the same principle when hitting golf balls on the range. Start with a swing fundamental that you want to improve, set a goal and plan your practice. Consider the “takeaway” fundamental. Find a target on the range and hit it **ONLY** thinking of the takeaway. Your teacher or coach should be able to tell you what the ball will do if you master that skill, like direction of the ball or the ball flight. Sometimes it may be that you practice the drill without hitting a ball or that you want to strike the ball a certain way. Practice until you achieve your goal. This is how tour players practice. They start with one thing to master and they repeat it over and over, thousands and thousands of times until they feel like they have it.

Another great drill is the eleven-ball drill for chipping. Take eleven balls and pick a hole to chip to. When you chip the eleven balls, take the five closest and the five away from the hole and the last ball (the eleventh) should be your average for that chip. It may be five feet, so again you should do this drill until you master it. Do this with all length chips. When you feel confident that your chips will be within a certain distance from the hole, you will be able to lower your scores.

If you follow this disciplined approach to practicing, you will build skills that will give you confidence and lead to your future success. If you have skill and confidence, you can achieve any goals you put your mind to.

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