Roadmap to Making Full Swing Changes

Making swing changes can be challenging so here is a general guideline to help you in the process. Everyone’s journey is going to look different so feel free to adjust this as needed for yourself. The first section of this roadmap is an overview of how to approach making swing changes, and on the last page, you will find a sample guide for a practice plan if you only have 1.5 hours to spend at the course. Feel free to adjust as needed.

My experience as both a player and a coach has allowed me to conclude that most players struggling to make changes simply don’t have an effective practice plan in place. It’s important to understand that HOW we practice is oftentimes far more valuable than WHAT we practice. A couple tips before we get started:

* I would suggest using something between a Pitching Wedge and a 7 iron when first working on a new concept
* Always check your basics – alignment, stance, grip, etc – we want to construct and maintain solid fundamentals
* Use a good camera angle when recording – if you aren’t sure where to start with that, check out the video about “How to Record Your Swing” on my Skillest profile

I want to share a brief story that you will probably relate to in some way. I started working with George Gankas in 2017 while playing professionally. I committed to taking a lesson once a month with him in the LA area even though I lived in Phoenix at the time. For that first year, I learned a lot about what we wanted to adjust in my swing and why. He also provided me with numerous drills, feels, and options that would help me make those changes. All in all, the lessons were phenomenal, but one thing was missing after a full year of work – I didn’t feel like my swing was noticeably different and my ball flight was practically the same as it had been at the start. Given the fact that I was practicing anywhere from 4-8 hours a day every single day (depending on whether I was playing a round), you can imagine how dejecting that felt for me. So I showed up to a lesson and wanted to talk through it with him. He heard me out and listened to my frustrations, then asked to see the videos on my phone. There were a few videos of my practice sessions, but not nearly enough and he immediately started asking questions about what my practice sessions look like in detail, how often I’m in front of a mirror, how often I record my swings/drills, and how I am monitoring swing changes if I’m never recording. It became clear very quickly that while I had been receiving incredible information about how to create the swing that I wanted, the way I was practicing wasn’t efficient or effective.

Below are some of the things that I started implementing immediately after that lesson. Making swing changes quickly became much easier and they translated to the course as well. If you can take a third-party perspective and look at HOW you are practicing, I’m sure you will find a number of leakages that are making it harder to implement the changes you’re working towards.

**KEY CONCEPT 1**

* Understanding the change(s) you are trying to make must come first. That includes why that change is desired, what the change will look like, and how to make it happen.

Regardless of whether you are taking lessons with your coach online or in person, ask questions! The more you can understand what you are working on, the better you will be able to manage those changes moving forward.

**KEY CONCEPT 2**

* Work on the changes without a golf ball in front of you at first. Use things like mirrors or other items so you can start associating the drills/feels with immediate visual feedback.

Doing this will help you monitor progress from the start. Let’s say you are working on some face control because your coach wanted to see the leading edge of your clubface parallel to your spine at P2 (shaft parallel to the ground in the backswing). Get down the line in your mirror, look in the mirror completely, and watch yourself take the club back until it is parallel to the ground – go super slow – then stop in that position and see where the face is relative to your spine. Make the adjustments needed, if any. It will usually come down to adjusting forearm rotation, grip, or wrist angles in this example. Reset from your setup position and repeat the process of just going to P2 over and over and over again until you can see yourself getting in the same position every single time. As you get more comfortable, try keeping a soft gaze at the ground where your ball would be, take the club back, stop at P2, then look in the mirror – what’s different? Do you see the same thing you just worked on or something else? Whatever that something else is, that is your GOLD – that is your ticket to continue working through some drills/feels.

**KEY CONCEPT 3**

* A golf ball should not change your process. You just built some great feels at home – apply them now. The ball DOES NOT MATTER right now.

If you don’t already, I would strongly suggest recording yourself at the range. You don’t need to record every single swing, but especially when working on a new motion, record some motions/swings so you can have the same type of visual feedback that you had at home in front of a mirror. So from the example above, setup to your ball, take the club back to P2 and stop – this is where you should already have some awareness as to whether you are close to your goal – if so, maybe take a half length swing from right there and send the ball 50 yards down range. It’s crucial to allow the ball to go anywhere and do anything at this stage. Don’t worry too much about contact or flight or distance yet. The entire goal of this stage is to change your motion, and that comes with a mental intent that isn’t consumed with hitting a perfect golf shot. Be willing to look goofy out there. I can’t tell you how many people would look at me like I was crazy when I was doing my drills, and how many of them would stop and watch when I started taking full swings. Repeat this over and over again until you start to feel more comfortable AND have been able to show on video that the changes are taking place. Consider not stopping at P2 after a little while and again, see what the differences are relative to when you do and don’t pause there. Again that is your GOLD. Those differences begin to lay out a roadmap of what you should exaggerate moving forward.

**KEY CONCEPT 4**

* Build a couple different speeds between your 50 yard drill swing and your course speed swing. Doing so will build more awareness in your swing and give you a way to shift up and down in speed as necessary while working on things.

We all want to swing the club fast, and we should! I can tell you from training with sports psychologists, stories from the Tour with other coaches, personal experience, and teaching experience – if you can’t do something slow, you won’t do it fast. As you increase your speed check in with your video to see what’s happening. It is very common for the changes to fall off a bit when we start swinging faster. Again this is your GOLD because it gives you a real measure of your progress over periods of time. One thing I always remind myself of is to exaggerate the changes far more than I think I need to any time I take my speed to the next gear. To give you some perspective, I learned the game playing toe up to toe up with the clubface. It took me a couple months to not only see real changes in my clubface on a regular basis, but also be able to work through the natural ball flight adjustments as well. It’s OK! Keep working through it.

**KEY CONCEPT 5**

* Quality over quantity. Quality can only come with increased quantity. Quality comes down to attention to detail, diligence in application, and unwavering patience.

In all likelihood, you don’t have 4-8 hours a day to work on your golf game. I understand that. You are also not likely trying to become the best player in the world like I was, and that’s ok. Everyone can place a higher level of importance on the quality of their practice, regardless of how much time or how many balls they are able to hit on the range. Be patient when making changes as well. Some changes are easier than others to make. Just so you know, I’ve been working on my setup for the same amount of time that I’ve been working with George – over 7 years. Our bodies and minds are constantly changing and that means that many changes will need to be revisited to keep your game optimal. Love the journey and the patience will be easy.

Sample Practice Plan

Minutes 0 – 15: Putting Stroke

* Work on your technique/stroke using mirrors, gates, plates, tees, etc

Minutes 16 – 30: Basic Chips

* Take 3 balls out of your bag and work on chip shots from short distances off the green
* Benefit here is the opportunity to feel out the bottom of your swing – where is the club contacting the ground? Where is the ball striking on the face? Check in with your touch
* Use different clubs if you’d like. Make it a point to move around a lot so you are constantly seeing different shots

Minutes 31 – 75: Driving Range

* Start with your wedges and hit some pitch shots between 20 and 50 yards for about 15 minutes
* Spend the next 15 minutes working through your drills at gradually increasing speeds starting at 50 yards and slowly increasing to maybe 100 ONLY IF you are seeing good results on video at slower speeds \*\*\*use your camera and stay committed to your tasks. Ignore the shot quality at first.\*\*\*
* Spend the last 15 minutes implementing the feels you just built into some 85% cruising swings using the targets on your range to create fairways/greens/etc and play a few holes of your favorite course in your mind right there on the range. Added bonus if you go through a full preshot routine with every one of those shots. If you don’t have one, make one.

Minutes 76 – 90: Putting Green

* Option A: work on your speed control on longer putts
* Option B: work on 6ft and in (these are the putts that shift momentum on the course)
* Plenty of drills for both options