

Regressing to Old Golf Habits

All golfers — whether they are a double-digit handicapper or a seasoned tour player — have a “primary golf swing.” A person may be bilingual, but he or she will always have a true, native or primary language. The same is true with a golf swing, which is most powerfully recognized by the brain through subconscious imprint or habit. It can be all those bad imprints or habits that produce compensation and poor shot-making, as well as unique quirks that translate to athletic feel. Mechanics and “feel” are inseparable, especially in very good players.

As a golfer makes changes, say to posture or grip or swing motion, the dramatic difference in feel allows for the player to more effectively assimilate the different swing feel with shot results. If you’re a golfer who feels too comfortable in the beginning, you’re probably not applying the swing change correctly. As you practice and are periodically validated by a coach or video that the swing is trending better — your body will become more comfortable with the different move. This is the point at which regression can occur. Regression can also occur during stress brought on by competition or a difficult golf course. It can also be a “fail safe” mechanism when faced with a situation you’re not totally comfortable with.

As you play and practice, you experience improvement and feel considerably more comfortable — the focus you once had at the outset of your change is not nearly as sharp. Your body, incrementally, will begin to reattach itself to its most powerful subconscious imprint and regression to your primary swing begins. Performance will decay, consistency will wane and overall confidence will fade. You become confused and frustrated — and it shows in your shot making and scoring.

This is the point at which your efforts must be redoubled — swing drills must be revisited, lesson notes or a journal (if you keep one) should be reviewed. Recognize you’ve entered a cloudbank and work to navigate back on plane and on course. Getting over the hump of initial swing regression will move you further along the path of replacing old habits with the truly subconscious move you desire and the repeatable swing that allows you to play consistently better golf.



Regressing to old habits can be reduced. Recognize that the mind does wander — during practice, playing with friends and in tournaments. Make attentiveness part of your practice regime. Accept carelessness on the practice range and casual rounds and it will become an attitude, even commonplace. Develop an attitude of attentiveness to the task at hand, the process — not the outcome. Where do you want the shot? What does that feel like? See it in your mind; now focus on a single thought and swing. From that point it’s the subconscious that does the work. Develop a plan to use for every shot and stick to it. However, once the shot is over — it’s over. Dwelling on a negative result will not be productive for what you have to do next. Expect the best result, but accept the result you get and move on. Your scores will improve and the effort you’ve put into learning better habits will hold for the long term.



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