

Practice smarter, not harder

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There was an old line that went something like this: How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. This can also be applied to bowling. How do you develop a consistent approach, release and increase your scores? That's right: practice.

Practice is one of the most neglected areas of the game today. Practice isn't just to fix something that isn't feeling right. It should also be used to increase muscle memory of the things that are "right" and to experiment. There was a time that an advanced bowler would bowl one to three times a week in league and then practice once or twice on top of that.

Did you know it takes almost 1,500 shots to incorporate a new technique into your game? That's a lot of games. If you are only bowling three games a week, it will take almost a year to learn something new. This is where practice is invaluable.

Here are some tips for smarter practices:

1. Call local centers for practice-lane availability and the price. Many centers offer discounts during off-times.
2. Inquire as to the time the lanes are dressed. Knowing when the lanes are dressed allows you to vary the practice on different shots. The shot plays much differently on fresh as opposed to dry. You should also consider bowling in centers that you normally don't frequent to add more shots to your repertoire.
3. Practice with a purpose. Don't just go in and try to throw strikes. Work on hand positions, spare shooting, and mental drills to add more skills for competitive play. A good ending drill is to throw three strikes to leave on.
4. Take all of the equipment to practice that you would take to a competition. A drill to try is to randomly select a different ball on every shot to help you understand how they differ. The goal is to be able to throw the ball confidently on every shot.
5. Do not worry about the score – focus on what you're learning. Last time I checked, there were no awards given for 300 games in practice.

Incorporate some of these suggestions in practice to see how they work for you. Good luck and keep knocking down those pins!