

LESSON TEE

Exclusive Golf Instruction From Southern California Teaching Professionals



Chris Smeal knows how to best manage his time when preparing for a round.

It's about time

FOLLOW THIS WARM-UP PLAN TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE BEST POSITION FOR SUCCESS ON THE COURSE. BY CHRIS SMEAL, PGA

You have limited time to prepare for a round of golf once you arrive at the course, and how you use this time is crucial to your success. It's an opportunity to warm up, put yourself in the right frame of mind, and see what you may be up against in terms of the course and the competition.

Before I tee off — whether I'm playing in a tournament or a casual round with my

friends — I'm focusing on three main facets: my swing, my feel on and around the greens, and my overall physical well-being.

I know everyone's pre-round warm-up routine is different. All golfers have their own set of tendencies, not to mention diverse schedules that dictate arrival time.

Here is how I prepare for a round — hopefully this advice can help you. >>>

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I like to arrive one hour and 15 minutes before my tee time.

Rushing to the course with only minutes to spare before your round is never good. Plan ahead, take your time, and slow down.

I like to have about an hour to get ready to play, so **the first 15 minutes after arrival is to take care of simple tasks and stretch.**

I check in with the starter or tournament staff upon arrival, so I don't become rushed during my warm-up session and have all of the administrative details taken care of. I make sure my bag is stocked with golf balls, tees, ball markers, a divot tool, Sharpie, rule book and gloves.

I reserve five minutes to stretch and prepare to swing the golf club. I like using two clubs or a weighted club to get loose.



Swinging two clubs is a great way to get loose.



Use a tee as an aim point to see if you're rolling your putts on line.

1 hour until tee time

Your goal for gearing up to play is to feel comfortable on the first tee. Eliminate as much mystery as possible in your game and always cover the most crucial bases.

The first thing I do is find out how the greens are rolling. **I'll head over to the practice putting green for 15 minutes** and start with long putts — 25- and 30-footers — and work my way down to 3-foot putts. One thing I always try to do is to look at the green and gauge the speed without rolling any putts. The better I get at this, the better distance control I have.

One important drill I like to do is to put a ball down at six feet and read the putt. I'll place a tee behind the hole for an aim point. I'll go through my full routine like it's a birdie putt on the first hole and see if I get my ball started on line or not. I will do this a few times for a right to left, left to right, and straight putt. I generally find subtle tendencies in my aim and will adjust to that and gain confidence in the adjustments.

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EDDIE MECKS

45 minutes until tee time

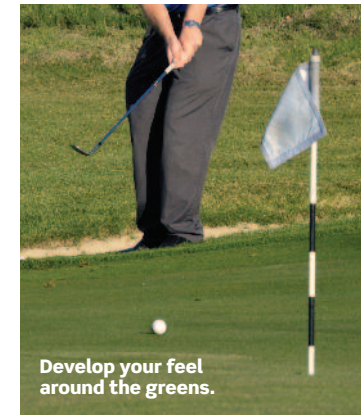
No matter how much time you have to hit golf balls before heading out to the course, always take at least five minutes to hit a couple of shots with different types of clubs — wedge, short iron, middle iron, hybrid, driver.

No matter which clubs I hit, the most vital aspect of my warm-up session on the driving range is establishing rhythm. I know my game well enough to understand that when I get anxious or nervous, my tempo becomes quicker and I lose control of my desired shot pattern.

Ideally, I will take 20 minutes on the driving range. I start with some 30-yard pitch shots to gain feel, speed, and control in my swing. From there, I progressively move up 10 yards to an 80-yard shot. I will then work through the bag, usually in this sequence: 9-iron, 7-iron, 5-iron, driver and 3-wood.

Whether or not you're playing a course you've played before, imagine and execute shots in certain scenarios, i.e. tee shot on a 175-yard par-3 hole, 230-yard approach on a par-5 hole.

One drill I always do is to place an alignment stick or club in front of my ball on the target line. I will hit different clubs trying to see where my ball is flying in relation to my target line and establish a pattern.



Develop your feel around the greens.

5 minutes until tee time

If there's one theme to remember just before you tee off, it's confidence. Do what you can to develop as much confidence as possible when you walk to the first tee.

In the last five minutes, if the driving range is close to the first tee **I will head back to the range and practice the shot on the opening drive.** I will go through my full routine, pretend the starter announced my name (even if it's not a tournament, this is still a fun exercise to put your mind in a focused state) and play the shot.

If I hit a shot from which I can gain confidence — even if it's the first attempt — then I'll stop and head to the first tee. If it's an unsatisfactory shot, I'll try again until I have something to rely on. This is a great drill to do before every event. **SG**

EDDIE MECKS



Spend time establishing rhythm on the range.

25 minutes until tee time

The biggest key to my preparation is warming up with shots around the green, because that's how I develop my "feel" for the day and develop the best strategy for taking advantage of scoring situations.

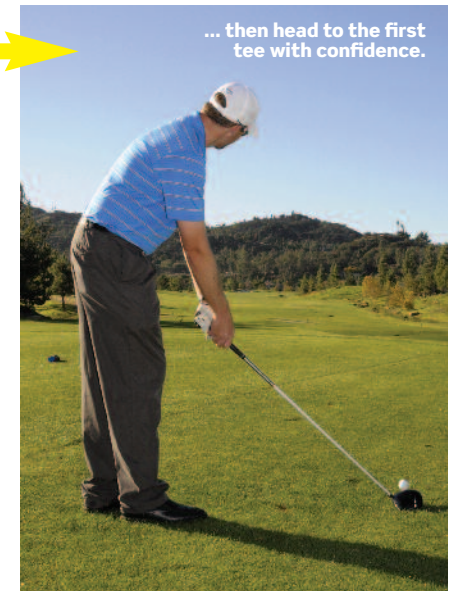
Assuming there's a warm-up short-game area, **I like to set aside 20 minutes for practicing pitches, chips and sand shots.** Not only can I get creative and see just how much touch I have that day, I can find out how the green reacts to all different types of shots — high, low, uphill, downhill, spinning, bump-and-run, etc.

I'll start with some basic chips and run the gamut, ensuring I have enough of a sample size to determine how much the ball runs out and whether I should alter my basic approach, i.e. using a pitching wedge instead of a lob wedge for a straightforward pitch.

If there's no short-game area, I'll just work on the motion of the shots on the driving range or around the collar of the practice putting green (assuming chipping and pitching is allowed).



Practice your opening tee shot on the range...



... then head to the first tee with confidence.