

The Practice/Learning Manual

2022

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“IT IS NOT THE HOURS INVESTED BUT WHAT IS INVESTED IN THE HOURS”

– JIM ROHN

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Practice: Perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one's proficiency.

Learning: The acquisition of knowledge or skills through exercise, study or being taught.

I think it is important we start with the above definitions. Like many phrases or terminology in golf we have attached a meaning and an action to them through peer usage and frequency of the terminology. To write this manual I needed to have a focus and a goal and for you to improve your game through training you need to identify what your goal is and how you are going to achieve that session by session.

Example: In today's session I am going to complete two tasks.

- 1. I am going to learn how to hit a punch shot under the wind.*
- 2. I am going to practice it with different clubs using the technique learned.*

We can of course view definitions differently and that's a common occurrence. My goal with this manual is not to say I am right; it is to get you to think what is your goal with your time. What are you actually trying to achieve? Investing time on its own is not enough if you want improvement.

Q: IF, STARTING TODAY, YOU COULD NEVER PRACTICE AGAIN WOULD YOUR CURRENT RATE OF IMPROVEMENT GET BETTER OR WORSE?

Q: ARE YOUR PRACTICE SESSIONS QUANTIFIABLY IMPROVING YOUR GAME?

For most of us I don't think we can actually answer either of these questions and not because we don't want to it is simply because we have no idea how to create an efficient practice session and or evaluate its effects on our game.

The goal of this manual is to help guide you in your practice sessions. We will look at dividing your time efficiently, preparing for each session in terms of focus and equipment, the difference between block and game day practice and how to create feedback in a technical session. We have also created some skill-based tasks that are purely for skill development with no technical focus or intent.

We all can appreciate that to make **Lasting** change that requires an application of the correct focus and work. Please go back and re read that last sentence and note we have highlighted the phrase "**Lasting**". Our goal as a team, you and I, is not to create a short-term temporary change. We are all aware that short term and temporary changes only lead back to the technique or rituals that were not producing our desired results in the first place. When we start to focus on the correct things and apply ourselves in an efficient manner the momentum that it creates can cause great things to happen and we will feed of that energy and enjoyment.

How most Golfers Practice

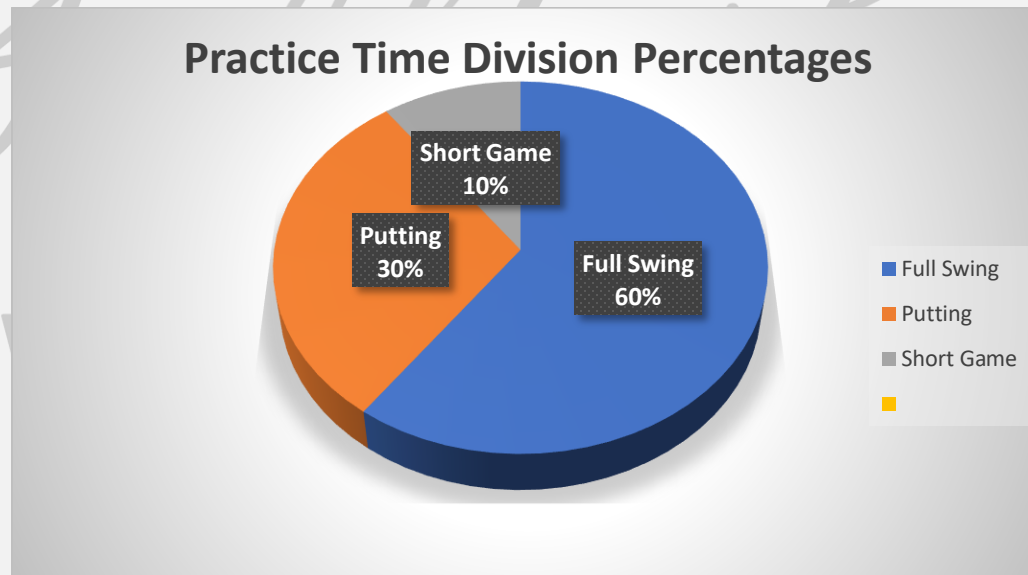
- No Plan.
- Tips/ Quick Fixes.
- Time invested sporadically in search of "magic" move.
- Frustration.
- Low Energy/Lack of enjoyment.

How we will practice from now on

- Create a plan/Focus or develop skills.
- Invest time wisely.
- Appreciation of progress.
- High energy/ Fun / Fulfillment.

DIVISION OF PRACTICE TIME

This is the first item we need to establish before we start to practice. We all have varying degrees of time to practice with one end of the spectrum being our Tour Players and the other end being the occasional weekend golfer. Thankfully, division of time is not influenced by amount of time. Below is a chart I give all my players and it divides what I feel is the correct number of percentages that you should follow in your practice plan.



EXAMPLE: If we were to get two hours to practice a week and follow the chart above, we would be practicing.

Full Swing: 72 minutes

Putting: 36 Minutes

Short Game: 12 Minutes

CASE STUDY OF ONE:

Although we have a template on how we like golfers to divide their practice time, we are not held firm to this template. We try to view all golfers as a case study of one meaning we might need to adjust the percentages in place to help you improve your game. For example, if we were to review a golfer's individual game and come to the conclusion that putting was the main issue in not achieving our goals then we would review the chart and look to change it until the putting improved.

NB- BALANCE - The reason for the chart is many players encountered the above situation and started to focus solely on putting, they will abandon all other practice and then the other skills in the game suffer. We must maintain a balance at all times in practice whatever the percentages.

PLAYER EXERCISE:

On a scale of 1- 10 with 1 being well below your current goals and 10 being exceeding goals, please give each department of your game a mark below:

Full Swing:

Putting:

Short Game:

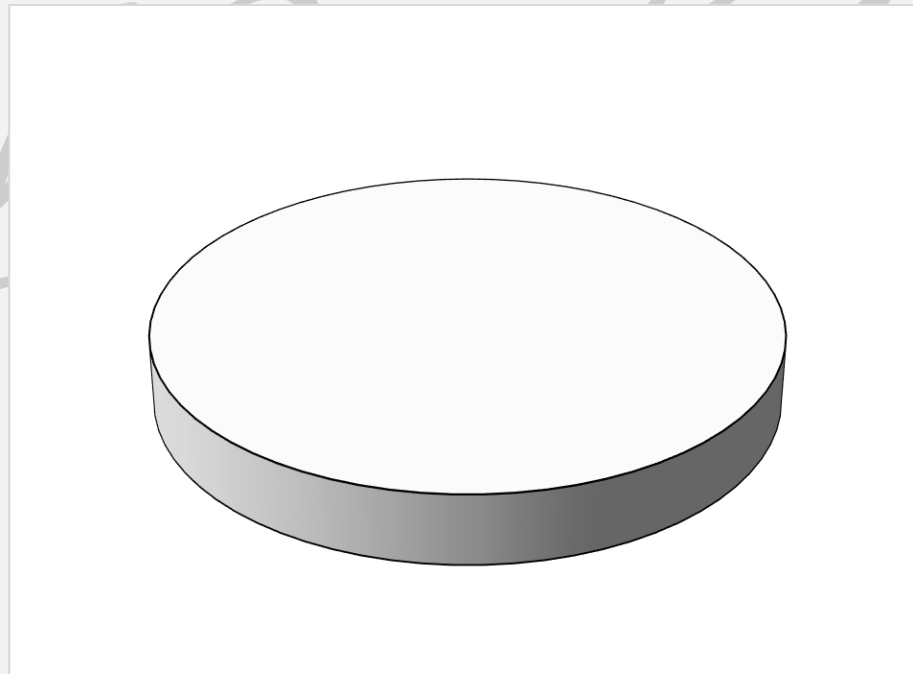
Once you have identified the lowest performing section above then we can apply new percentages to our Practice Pie via our Practice Time Divider.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD YOUR PRACTICE TIME CHART](#)

WHEN TO UPDATE: It is very important that we view the Practice Pie as a ritual and never stray from it once it is in place. For my players, we update this after every two-week period based on results and analysis of their performance. The reason we say two weeks is we can all have bad performance days or one of events in terms of putting poorly or driving below our expectations. What we want to avoid is a knee jerk reaction to those one of events. We want to always deal in patterns not occurrences and so reviewing your game and your statistics over a two-week period maintains that principle.

YOUR PRACTICE PIE

Based on all that we have discussed in this section so far how would you fill out the Practice Pie below for your own practice time starting tomorrow? This is your opportunity to set the ritual for your next two weeks of practice.



NB: If you are looking to improve your game, please do not turn up to a practice session without a plan. There is no improvement to be sought from chaos and mismanagement.

BLOCK PRACTICE VERSUS GAME DAY PRACTICE

BLOCK: Changing the movements in the golf swing or short game action by repeating the chosen movement in the same environment repeatedly.

GAME DAY / RANDOM: This is practicing the act of the shot itself while varying the environment in terms of lie of the ball, stance, club, situation and flight etc.

Another way to look at this would be to imagine a contestant on the TV show American Ninja Warrior. In a gym session prepping for the show, they have the option of working purely on one particular challenge and how they are required to move in that challenge (BLOCK) or simulating the event and running the whole track. (GAME DAY or RANDOM)

PLAYER EXERCISE: Now when we are looking at what type of practice is the most effective, we have to again look at the needs of the player. Let me propose a situation and see which option you would choose.

PLAYER A:

- Plays 3 times per week.
- Practices twice a week.
- Has a good understanding of swing technique.

PLAYER B:

- Has played once in their lives
- Never practice up to this point
- Has very little understanding of golf swing and technique

If you had to choose Block or Game Day practice for Player A and Player B which, do you feel would be more beneficial?

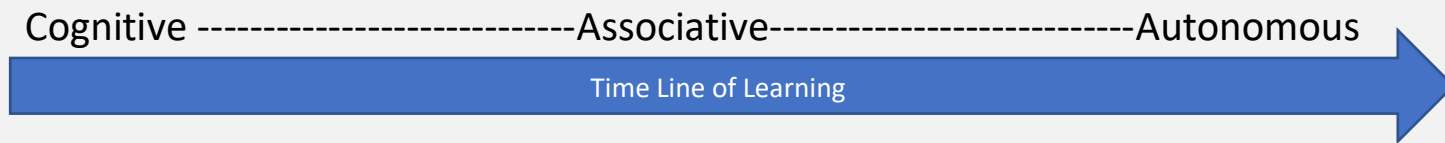
Player A would definitely benefit more from a mixture of both while Player B would need to concentrate more on Block type practice to create a basic technique to play this game. Again, this is based off the context that both players are receiving instruction and have the intention to improve.

THE TECHNICAL:

Everyone who receives this manual could quite possibly be working on something different. In the following sections we have given you pure skill drills without any cognitive technical focus however for this section let us discuss the three stages of learning and some examples of how you could approach that during a training session.

There are three stages to learning a new motor pattern in keeping with the Fitts and Posner model.

- 1) Cognitive: Been exposed to the new skill or movement and the process of discovery. Failures are present as movement “success” demands large amount of attention. Awareness of incorrect movement present but not yet awareness of how to correct.
- 2) Associative: The learning and training of the movement. Improved awareness of the movement and ability to correct and problem solve. Less direct attention needed by player to complete movement. Ability to perhaps involve new movement into other tasks or motions.
- 3) Autonomous: The movement is now mastered by the player. Little if any focused attention is required to preform the movement. Errors small and easily assessed and improved. Confidence in the action improves. Capability of preforming tasks simulatively now present.



- Any motor pattern you are wishing to change should be done so firstly at a speed of completion. This means you must go as slow as it takes to complete the new pattern at first. This is to achieve cognitive success.
- We welcome all feedback but it must be correct feedback. Correct feedback is essential when changing motor patterns. Use cameras and training aids to quantify your work and feedback. Do not make judgements on your game without accurate measurement.
- Bleeder sessions are a good way to mix Cognitive and Autonomous. This is a timed session of alternating between cognitive and autonomous. The player will rehearse the new pattern (with or without club) 3 times and then hit one full shot, the fourth shot, and then repeat. The fourth shot should be done without thinking. This can also assess what stage of learning you are currently at.

PRACTICE – SETTING IT UP

The set up:

We will discuss dividing time and intent before your practice session but we also need to address preparation in terms of what you want to bring to a session. Feel free to add to this list as you see fit.

- Water and Snacks (maintaining energy and mental preparedness is essential and a basic).
- Notebook and Pencil (hand written notes imprint more than cell phone notes).
- Practice Balls if required. (All short game practice should be done with Game Day balls)
- Two alignment sticks.
- Clubs that you wish to use in practice.
- Spare glove.
- Towel and cleaning brush for clubs.
- Training aids or devices you require for the day.
- Notes or downloaded visuals of drills.
- Pre set time allotment plus phone alarms set to alert when change of skill is due.
- Cell phone stand or other apparatus for filming. (Plus Battery Pack)

The above is just a basic list of a Tour Professional's set up before event travelling to the practice session. We will address some other requirements when we discuss Putting and Short Game practice.

Before we begin our full game practice, we should always begin by warming up. Players should be activating and exercising all muscle groups before hitting balls, however if you do not have time to that, I would highly encourage you to start each session with 5 x 5 wedge rule.

5 x 5 Wedge Rule

5 Chip Shots of 5 yards.

5 Wedge Shots of 25 yards.

5 Wedge Shots of 50 Yards.

5 Wedge Shots of 75 Yards.

5 Wedge Shots of 100 Yards.

Once the 5 x 5 has been completed we would then begin the practice session. We would have already decided our division of Block versus Game Day practice. Any decision that effects your practice efficiency should be decided before beginning any session.

NOTES:

SWITCHING LOCATIONS: One thing I advise my tour players to do is separate their areas of Block and Game Day practice. This is not always possible but even moving stations at your practice location will create a fresh start and fresh objective for whichever section is next.

FRUSTRATION: If you begin to get frustrated at any stage, I want you to stop your process and either take a full break away from your bag or switch back to a wedge and hit some small feel shots. Our energy defines our focus so if our energy starts to become pessimistic or deflated it will directly affect the production of the remaining time.

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RANGE TASKS

We have created random or skill tasks for you. They are deliberately non-technically specific as that would require a more individual movement assessment.

FOR FULL SWING

TASK 1:

Task 1 is a Game Day/ Skill task. We will take a green that is 100 yards away and have 10 golf balls. The goal of this task will depend on your skill level and is designed to see how many ball you can land on the green surface.

BEGINNER : 3/10 on Green-----**INTERMEDIATE : 5/10 on Green**-----**ADVANCED : 8/10 on Green**

TASK 2:

Task 2 is a Game Day/ Skill task. We will take a green that is 100 away out and have 8 golf balls. The goal of this task will depend on your skill level. We split the target Green into two halves, left and right and the goal, depending on level, is to hit a number of golf balls to either half.

BEGINNER : 1/4 on each side of Green-----**INTERMEDIATE : 2/4 on Each side of Green**-----
ADVANCED : 3/4 on Each side of Green

Task 3:

Task 3 is a Game Day/ Skill task. We will take a green that is 100 yards away and have 10 golf balls. The goal of this task will depend on your skill level. We will split the Green into four quadrants. We will have Front Left/Back Left as well as Front Right/Back Right. The goal depending on level is to hit a set number of golf balls to each quadrant. Please note there is no beginner level on this task.

INTERMEDIATE: 1 Ball on Each Quadrant of Green-----**ADVANCED: 2 Balls on Each Quadrant of Green**

The further development of the above Task would be to move to a green 150 yards away and repeat.

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DRIVING TASKS ON RANGE:

BEGINNER TASK – **INTERMEDIATE** – **ADVANCED**

Replicating driver situations on the practice range can be challenging. What we aim to do is replicate the course conditions.

-----FOR ALL DRIVING PRACTICE, YOU MUST GO THROUGH YOUR WHOLE SHOT PROCESS-----

DO NOT DRAG AND HIT

TASK 1: Hit it and quit it:

This is a task for the end of your practice session and is a skill challenge. Create a fairway on the range by choosing two points that are roughly 40 yards wide and see how many balls you can land in your fairway. There are no ball limits on this task. The goal to completion varies on the level of player:

BEGINNER : 2/8 Drives in Fairway ----- **INTERMEDIATE : 6/8 Drives in Fairway**

ADVANCED : 8/8 Drives in Fairway

TASK 2: Marks out of ten:

This is a feedback task for driver centredness of strike. You will need a way to create impact feedback where the ball hits on the face. The two options would be Scholl's foot spray or impact tape. The goal to completion varies on the level of player:

BEGINNER : 2/8 Centered Ball Marks ----- **INTERMEDIATE : 5/8 Centered Ball Marks** ----- **ADVANCED**
: 7/8 Centered Ball Marks

TASK 3: Max it Out:

This is a speed production task. This task should be placed either at the very beginning of your session or at the end. There is no goal in this task other than trying to create as much speed as possible. The goal is to max out your speed. Accuracy is NOT a requisite in this task.

PUTTING

BEGINNER TASK – **INTERMEDIATE** – **ADVANCED**

Task 1: Numbered balls

This task is designed to work your ability to control pace. Each ball has a number written on it between 1 and 4. Choose a spot to putt from and the ball needs to finish the same footage past the hole as the number it represents

Task 2: Half and Half

This task is designed to work on your ability to roll the ball end over end. You will require 3 golf balls that have one side coloured in and one side blank so you can see the roll. Choose 4 different length putts over 5/10/15 and 20 feet. You will complete 3 putts from each length and you must grade yourself on each putt starting with a A for excellent roll and D for poor.

Task 3: Blind Call

This task is designed to work on your ability to visualize and remember distance. Choose a new putt each time for this task. Go through your routine and before pulling the trigger close your eyes. Keep your eyes closed after you hit the putt and guess if you have finished short or long or perfectly beside the hole. How good is your feel?

Task 4: Tee Gate

This task is designed to work on your ability to return the putter head to its original path and therefore ensure a centred strike. Choosing a 5-foot putt take your set up and place two tees in the ground on either side of the putter head at address. The distance between tees and the putter is a good way to advance this drill. Start with comfortable room and progress. If you hit the tees then widen them until you can hit 5 putts in a row.

Task 5: Roll it marker

This task is designed to work on your ability to start your putts on line which is one of the main pillars for good putting. Choose a 10-foot putt and place a plastic ball marker 5 ft from your start point. The goal is to roll the ball over the plastic marker. Use 3 balls per round over 5 rounds and keep score and make note of the missing left or right.

CHIPPING

BEGGINER TASK – **INTERMEDIATE** – **ADVANCED**

NOTE: When chipping or putting its important to practice with game day balls or the golf ball that you usually play with to have the same spin and roll out reaction that you will have during your round.

TASK 1 : Break the Bank

This task is designed to test your feel. For this task choose a medium difficulty chip shot. You start with \$100 in a virtual bank account but each chip shot you hit you must deduct the distance from the hole off your balance. For example, finish five feet away and you are now at a balance of \$95. The goal is to play as many shots as you can before going broke.

TASK 2: The Toe the Heel and the Middle:

This task is designed to discover the different strike areas of the club and more importantly locating the center of the wedge to gain maximum control. The task involves 3 golf balls per round and

repeated for 5 rounds. The goal is for each round to hit ball 1 and ball 3 of either heel or toe and note how the ball acts. Ball 3 must be hit out of the middle of the club.

TASK 3: Lucky Loft

This task is designed to use lift effectively and use your imagination with different lofts. The task involves you choosing 5 different locations around a chipping surface but must choose a random club to play it with. You select four clubs for example, 56-degree, 48 degrees, 9 Iron and 8 Iron. You use four golf balls and assign each a number from 1 -4. Your most lofted club, in this case 56, will be #1. Go to location 1 and drop a random ball without looking and whichever numbered ball it is you must use that club.

TASK 4: Percentage Gains

Selecting a standard chip shot of minimum 20 feet with your default chipping club. You will attempt the following 4 shots from this point.

Shot 1: Fly 20%/Roll 80%

Shot 2 Fly 40%/Roll 60%

Shot 3 Fly 60%/Roll 40%

Shot 4 Fly 80%/Roll 20%

TASK 5: Grooves:

The design of this task is to create impact point awareness. This more advanced task requires the player to attempt to hit each groove on the face of the club. There is not concrete way to prove your goals but it creates a fun feedback task. You start with 3 golf balls per round over 5 rounds. The goal is to hit bottom of the club, the top of the club and the middle of the club. There are many variables involved here including radius, ball position, shaft lean etc....

TASK 6 : Spin or not to spin

This task is designed to create different spins with your standard chipping wedge. Choose a chip shot that has at least 20 feet between you and the target. Place an alignment stick 15/10/5 feet short of the hole to the side of your landing path.

With four golf balls per round,

Ball 1 must land short of the stick that is 15 feet from the hole, get to the hole but not past it.

Ball 2 must land between the first two sticks and get to the hole but not past it.

Ball 3 between stick 2 and 3 and get to the hole but not past it.

Ball 4 between stick 3 and 4 and get to the hole but not past it.

PERFORMANCE

Please bear in mind this is a manual and not one of my performance seminars so we will keep this section to the point and for you to explore. At the end of this section, I have added in some questions I ask my players in those seminars to help you get started on the discovery path.

When we talk about training, we need to observe that the long-term goal is to be able to perform when required. We recognize that the biggest differential between practice/learning and game day performance is our state i.e., how we feel, act and think.

When we are trying to perform on the course our body and mind are in a different environment to the training area. So, we each have a choice as player.

1. Create a similar environment in training as to that experienced in game day.

Option 1 would require creating challenging environments in practice. This can be done through challenges or competitions with other players.

2. Create a similar state in game day as to in training.

Option 2 would require creating a more relaxed and confident identity of you as a golfer. Working on pre shot, after shot routines as well as emotional state.

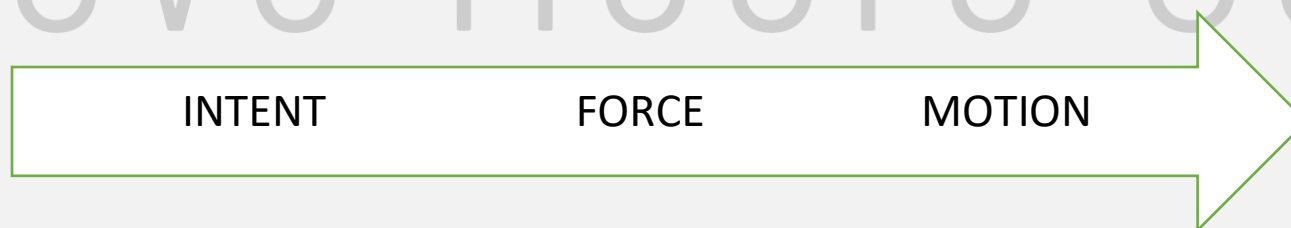
What is your identity as a golfer?

Give

Reasons why you identify as that golfer?

As much as we would like to believe it is not the case, our head really does rule when it comes to golf. We start with intent which creates force which in turn creates the motion.

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How you view yourself as a player is of massive importance. Below are some questions you should ask yourself because asking questions is the quickest way to get on the right path to seeing results and is a form of performance practice.

1. DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO PRACTICING?
2. ARE YOU AWARE OF WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH WITHIN THIS GAME?
3. HAVE YOU EVER DOUBTED YOUR ABILITY TO HIT A CERTAIN SHOT?
4. DO YOU PLAY YOUR WORST OR BEST GOLF WHEN UNDER PRESSURE?
5. DO YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO STAY FOCUSED THROUGHOUT AND ENTIRE ROUND?
6. DO YOU GET FRUSTRATED ON THE COURSE?
7. DO YOU REPPEAT THE SAME MISTAKES ON THE COURSE FREQUENTLY?

BELIEF QUESTIONS

1. I believe I will play well nearly all the time?
2. I believe I can achieve my goals in golf?
3. When I think about my round before teeing off most of those images are positive and feature good outcomes?
4. I very rarely experience negative emotions during a shot?
5. I trust my swing mechanics?

How you answered the above questions should highlight the areas we need to improve to reach your goals. If you have answered NO to more than two of the above questions then you need to start to create a stronger identity of you as a golfer.

“I DIDN'T COME THIS FAR TO ONLY COME THIS FAR”

A stylized, cursive signature of 'SMG' in black ink.

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