

# What's Your PSR?

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Watch a good curler for a few ends and you will notice something. It doesn't matter if the player is shooting a draw or a hit, the preparation for the shot is always the same. Having a consistent Pre-Shot Routine is key to better shot making.

There are several things that go into a good pre-shot routine and they all contribute to setting the table for a successful shot. Doing these things every time makes them almost automatic and it frees up the shooter's mind to focus on one or two remaining elements that are needed for a successful shot.

Here is a step-by-step scenario of a common and effective pre-shot-routine:

- Except for skips, as the other team's stone is sliding down the ice, move your stone next to the hack. (Skips follow a similar routine but it starts after the opposing team's shot has been completed and the skip goes down to the delivering end of the ice).
- Clean the ice immediately in front of the hack.
- Squat with your hack foot in the hack, clean the stone off to the side of the hack, and then slide it over in front of your hack foot.
- Stand up behind the hack and wait for your skip to call the next shot and put the target broom in place.
- Step into the hack with the toe of your hack foot pointed directly at the skip's broom.
- Make sure your hips and shoulders are square to the desired line of delivery.
- Squat down into the hack, making sure to maintain your toe, hip, and shoulder alignment.
- Position the stone in front of your hack foot and directly on top of the imaginary line that runs from your hack foot to the skip's broom.
- Grip the stone with the wrist slightly elevated and the index and middle finger directly over the center of the stone (the bolt hole).
- Cock the handle to the 10 o'clock or 2 o'clock position in preparation to throw the desired turn.
- Take a deep, cleansing breath to clear your mind so it can calmly tell your body what weight you want to throw (hopefully you have developed muscle memory so your muscles can respond accurately).

Do the exact same things every time. It doesn't matter if you are throwing a guard, a draw to the house, hack weight, or a hit. Make it a sequence that you follow prior to every shot you throw, both in games and when practicing. This routine sets the table for throwing on the correct line of delivery and concentrating on driving out of the hack with the desired weight for the shot that was called.

Here are a few subsequent items that you should also routinely keep in mind. When you begin your delivery motion, make sure that you bring the stone back to your hack foot and that your subsequent forward movement is directly toward the skip's broom. Don't introduce any

sideways movements along the way or you will probably end up throwing the stone wide or narrow.

Also, do not pull the rock back with your hack arm – pull it back with your torso. Always keep the rock out in front of your head so you can look over the top of the stone while keeping an eye on the skip's broom. If you pull the stone back with your arm it will end up under your torso and you will probably end up pushing it out in front of your body during the slide and it will, in all likelihood, end up off line.

Teams should also have a pre-shot routine. Every team's routine will be different depending on team dynamics and player preferences. For example, when is it okay to talk about the shot that is being played or about the desired weight? Some teams only talk things over before a player settles into the hack; after that it is quiet time for shooter concentration. Conversely, other teams seem to function just fine even though there is constant chattering going. Figure out what works for each player and for your team and then make it part of your team's routine.

On a totally separate matter, Kay in Two Harbors asked me to remind players about bonspiel etiquette. Local clubs go to a huge amount of work to schedule, promote, and run bonspiels. These events are fun for local club members and out-of-town guest and new curlers are especially encouraged to try bonspieling. But nothing is more disheartening than to have teams drop out at the last minute after the draw has been completed and teams have been contacted about start times. And don't call at the last minute and say that you need the host club to find players for your team or you will have to drop out. Please sign up early and make sure that everyone on your team is committed to playing. Help keep the event fun for everyone, including local organizers.

Until next time – develop a pre-shot routine that works for you and make it something that you adhere to all the time - for every shot during both games and practice. It will make you a better curler. Good Curling!

*Jon Mielke lives in Bismarck and is a Level III instructor, a Level III coach, and a member of the US Curling Hall of Fame. All of his previous training articles are available on line at: USA Curling – Media – Curling News – Columnists – Jon Mielke.*