

Winter can be the perfect time to improve your golf game. Here are some tips from Cindy Miller to help you do just that.

Improve Your Putting During Winter

Most people could eliminate three to five shots per round if they just improved their putting. Let's say you don't live near a dome and want to practice at home. What can you do?

1. Practice Your Putting on Carpet

You can purchase a 6-foot piece of indoor/outdoor carpet at a local hardware store. Lay the carpet out on your living room floor, basement, garage or wherever there is room. Place a quarter on the rug as the cup. Having something smaller than a hole will help you become more accurate and the real cup will appear *huge* to you.

Start practicing from 2 feet away, using your backhand. If you are right-handed, you will putt one-handed with only your right hand. Stand a little open to the target so you can easily see the line between the ball and the hole. Practice making 10 to 100 2-foot putts per day one-handed. (Your goal is to hit the quarter on each putt.)

Once you're able to make most of the 2-footers one-handed, add your other hand. Be sure you can see the line and can hit the quarter on each putt.

As you become comfortable and gain confidence, move back to 3 feet, 4 feet, 5 feet and, eventually, 6 feet. You will make more putts when the snow melts.

2. Straighten Your Putting with a Yardstick

While you are at the hardware store, purchase a metal yardstick. Place the metal yardstick on the floor. On one side of the yardstick, there should be an open hole. Place a golf ball on top of the open hole. Practice hitting 3-footers down the yardstick. Your mission is to see how many putts you can roll all the way down the yardstick without the ball falling off. You will learn how to see a straight putt, how to set your clubface square to the target, and how to roll the golf ball on a straight line for 3 feet.

If you tend to open the face, the ball will fall off the yardstick to the right. If you pull it, the ball will fall off the left side.

Practice Your Full Swing Indoors

Most of us would love to hit all shots clean, airborne and straight. If you have room in your home to make half-swings with a short iron, I suggest you do so. You can use the indoor/outdoor carpet you purchased to practice putting to hit shots.

1. Pour a little flour on the carpet about the size of a quarter. Take small swings practicing brushing the carpet on the downswing where the flour is. Learning to make clean contact with the flour as your target without a ball will help you when there is a ball there.
2. I understand you cannot hit real golf balls in your living room. You can, however, purchase some marshmallows. Yes, I said marshmallows. You can practice hitting clean shots in the living room off the indoor/outdoor carpet using marshmallows as golf balls. It might be a little crazy, but at least you won't hurt anything.

Work on Improving Your Alignment

Many people are unsure how to aim correctly. If you frequently watch the LPGA Tour on television, you will see many caddies standing behind players to help them line up their shots. In 2019, this will not be allowed, and players will need to line up their shots on their own.

The ball goes where the face points, not your shoulders. Learn to aim the clubface at the target and align your body parallel to the left of the target for right-handed players. Your body will be parallel to the right if you are left-handed.

Take a short iron. Find a wall in your house that you could practice setting up along. Pretend you are hitting a ball down that target line. Practice walking up to the ball parallel to the wall. Set up to the shot. The wall will not allow you to aim to the right. You may need to learn how to see the true line you want the ball to travel. It may look way left to you if you are right-handed or way right to you if you are left-handed.

Cindy Miller is a former LPGA Tour Player, a current member of The Legends Tour of the LPGA, a Golf Channel Academy Lead Coach, and 2010 LPGA National Teacher of the Year.