



## The Magic of Deliberate Practice

Have you ever progressed more slowly than you'd prefer? You might feel that you're putting in more time and effort than the next person, but you can't seem to get ahead. *Science suggests that the road to becoming an expert is found through deliberate practice.* Scientists believe that this is all that's required to become an expert in any field.

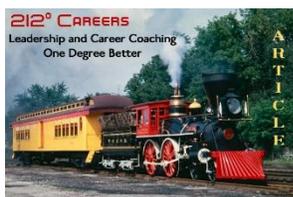
How you practice can have a much bigger impact on your results than how much you practice. Natural talent isn't considered necessary within this learning model.

### Use deliberate practice to master any skill:

1. **Deliberate practice must be deliberate.** *Deliberate practice starts with a plan and has a goal.* You might choose to focus on driving to the basketball goal with your left hand or work on your minor chord changes on the guitar. Randomly shooting baskets or strumming the guitar while watching commercials isn't deliberate.
  - Divide your goal into sub-skills. Consider what you want to achieve and then determine the skills necessary to reach that goal.
2. **Track your practice.** Avoid relying on your memory to track your practice. Use a notebook, spreadsheet, or other means to record your results. Then, review your practice session and make your plan for your next session. Spend a few minutes on this.

- The better your plan, the faster you'll progress. ***Avoid the trap of working mindlessly.*** Have a plan and continue to strengthen that plan.
3. **Find a way to measure your skill.** If you're mastering an instrument, record yourself and listen. If you're practicing your 3-point shot, determine your success rate.
  4. **Be smart.** Deliberate practice, even in small doses, can be much more effective than endless, mindless practice. Avoid believing that you must practice 8+ hours per day to see significant results.
    - ***Focus on practicing as intelligently as possible and then worry about how much time you're putting into it.***
  5. **Turn off all distractions.** Turn off your electronic devices during your deliberate practice.
  6. **Practice near the limit of your capability.** You'll get the best return on your time investment if you practice at the point where you make regular errors. Correcting those errors is vital. You don't learn much while doing things that are easy for you.
    - If you're constantly making mistakes, pull back a little. If you're learning to speak Russian, taking the equivalent of a PhD-level course won't be helpful.
  7. **Keep a regular schedule.** Experts believe the maximum amount of deliberate practice that can be completed in a day is 4-5 hours. If you can do more than this, you're probably not practicing deliberately.
    - ***Limit your sessions to 90 minutes or until your focus starts to wander.*** Use multiple sessions to reach a maximum of hours per day.
  8. **Seek a mentor.** Until you're an expert yourself, you can't accurately determine all of your mistakes. You also won't know the best way to correct them. Find a great mentor and use them effectively. While you might not be able to have a mentor present for every moment of your practice, spend as much time with them as possible.

Give deliberate practice a chance for a month. Resolve to practice at least one hour each day for the next 30 days. ***Practice deliberately and stretch yourself.*** You'll be amazed at the improvement you enjoy in one short month.



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