

DELIBERATE PRACTICE

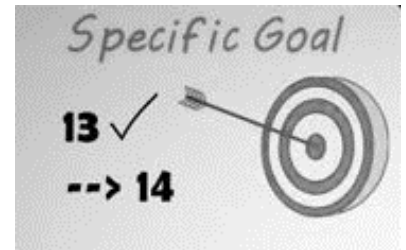


In the book, *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise*, Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool describe four core components of purposeful practice:

1. Specific Goal

It's crucial to establish a reachable, **specific goal**. Vague overall performance targets like 'succeed' or 'get better' won't cut it.

- "The key thing is to take that general goal—get better—and turn it into something specific that you can work on with a realistic expectation of improvement."¹
- "I would argue that the key thing that people have misinterpreted is that it's not just a matter of accumulating hours. If you're doing your job, and you're just doing more and more of the same, you're not actually going to get better."²



2. Mental Representations

Mental representations allow us to plan and visualize a process, which will help us in performing it. They also allow us to foresee and expect any problems or surprises, and plan how to respond.

- "Anders says, what sets expert performers apart from everyone else is the quality and the quantity of their mental representations. Through years of practice, they develop highly complex and sophisticated representations of the various situations they are likely to encounter in their fields."¹
- Even when the skill being practiced is primarily physical, a major factor is the development of proper mental representations. Consider a competitive diver working on a new dive. Much of the practice is devoted to forming a clear mental picture of what the dive should look like at every moment and, more importantly, what it should feel like in terms of body positioning and momentum.¹



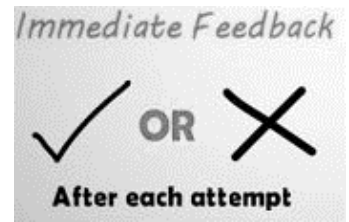
¹ Ericsson, A. & Pool, R. (2016). *Peak: secrets from the new science of expertise*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

² Ericsson, Anders. Comment on "Beyond 10,000 Hours of Practice: What Experts Do Differently." *Knowledge@Wharton*(web log), May 19, 2016. <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/anders-ericsson-book-interview-peak-secrets-from/>.

3. Immediate Feedback

One must receive **immediate feedback** on their performance. Without it, they can't figure out what they need to modify or how close they are to achieving their specific goal.

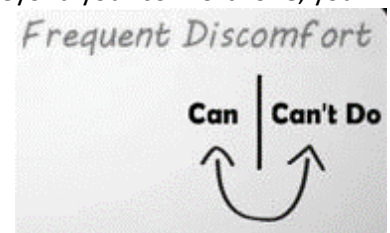
- “When you measure the performance of health professionals, teachers, and counselors objectively, you find that their performance rarely improves much after their first two years of professional experience. That is, they rarely get better with practice. And the reason, as we discuss in the book, is clear: They are not getting the sort of practice or training that leads to improvement. One of the main problems is that when people work at these jobs, they rarely get accurate immediate feedback about their performance.” Interview with Anders Ericsson³
- “Even the most motivated and intelligent student will advance more quickly under the tutelage of someone who knows the best order in which to learn things, who understands and can demonstrate the proper way to perform various skills, who can provide useful feedback, and who can devise practice activities designed to overcome particular weaknesses.”¹



4. Frequent Discomfort

If it's comfortable, then it is not imposing stress and there will be no growth. As Ray Krok once stated, “When you're green, you grow. When you're ripe, you rot.”

- “This is a fundamental truth about any sort of practice: If you never push yourself beyond your comfort zone, you will never improve.”¹
- “Research has shown that, generally speaking, once a person reaches that level of “acceptable” performance and automaticity, the additional years of “practice” don't lead to improvement. If anything, the doctor or the teacher or the driver who's been at it for twenty years is likely to be a bit worse than the one who's been doing it for only five, and the reason is that these automated abilities gradually deteriorate in the absence of deliberate efforts to improve.”¹



³ Anders Ericsson, "Interview with Anders Ericsson," interview by Tricia Van Der Grient, The Progress-Focused Approach, May 27, 2016, <http://www.progressfocused.com/2016/05/interview-with-anders-ericsson.html>.