

# Study raises online golf tutorials to above par

April 1 2016

---

The internet is overflowing with online tutorials dedicated to improving your game of golf and other motor skills. A new study in *Frontiers in Psychology* has shown that straightforward changes to the way these tutorials are presented can have a measurable difference in the performance of the student.

"Lots of research has shown that observing both novice and expert golfers online will help you to learn a new golf shot. However, our latest findings show that it is important to know the level of expertise you are observing before you watch the tutorial," said Luc Proteau, a Professor at the University of Montreal, co-author of this new study.

Knowing students of online tutorials benefit from watching all levels of expertise, Luc Proteau and co-author Mathieu Andrieux set out to understand whether it was better to know beforehand the [skill level](#) of the demonstration, or if students should be first left to evaluate the performance themselves. Arguments were put forward to support both approaches - [prior knowledge](#) of the skill level may enable a student to decide whether to imitate or detect errors/weakness. Alternatively, assessing the skill of a performer while watching them may activate more elaborate cognitive processes, such as detecting errors.

Volunteers from the University of Montreal were asked to perform a timed test. This consisted of hitting a start/end target button and knocking down three barriers in a clockwise motion that were standing on a wooden base the size of a monopoly board. After performing a number of these tests, they watched a variety of demonstrations, with

one group knowing beforehand the skill level of each performance and the other group only being told afterwards. The test times of the volunteers improved considerably after watching the demonstrations, whether they knew the skill level or not. This confirmed previous research that observation can help us to learn a new motor skill. However, it was the test times of the volunteers who had prior knowledge of the demonstrator's skill level that showed the most improvement.

"We believe this is because prior knowledge helps to tune your brain into picking up technical errors if the tutorial is of a poor performance or imitation if it is known to be a good one," Proteau explained.

The authors think their findings are especially important when a student may not be able to guess the expertise of demonstrator from the performance alone. "On the internet it is easy to find 'how to' demonstrations, such as changing a spark plug or plumbing a kitchen sink. However, in golf for example, the result (ball trajectory and final distance) of the observed swing and therefore the expertise of the model, can be difficult to determine. While you will learn something by watching such a demonstration, you will learn even more and your performance will be better if you know the expertise level of shot you are watching," said Proteau.

It is believed the findings from this study can provide both teachers and students with a simple framework to maximize learning and improve results.

**More information:** Mathieu Andrieux et al. Observational Learning: Tell Beginners What They Are about to Watch and They Will Learn Better, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2016). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00051](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00051)

Provided by Frontiers

Citation: Study raises online golf tutorials to above par (2016, April 1) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-04-online-golf-tutorials-par.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.