

## Insights from *Peak* by Anders Ericsson & Robert Pool

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**“The most effective (improvement) method of all: deliberate practice. It is the gold standard, the ideal to which anyone learning a skill should aspire.” - Anders Ericsson**

**Turn your practice sessions into deliberate practice sessions by adding ‘S.P.I.C.E.’ to your approach.**

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### **pecific target for performance**

*If you have vague performance targets like ‘get better’ or ‘succeed’ you’re simply wasting your time. To improve performance you need specific performance goals.*

*Steve Faloan was able to recite 82 digits by having clear goals the entire way. If he could successfully recite 39 digits, his sole focus was getting to 40 digits.*

**“Deliberate practice involves well-defined, specific goals and often involves improving some aspect of the target performance; it is not aimed at some vague overall improvement.” - Anders Ericsson**



### **eriods of intense undistracted focus**

*Before Steve attempted 39 digits he gave himself an exciting pep talk (“you got this Steve!”) before concentrating intently on the numbers Anders gave him. For those 1 hour sessions all that mattered was hitting his targets.*

**“Deliberate practice is deliberate, that is, it requires a person’s full attention and conscious actions. You seldom improve much without giving the task your full attention. It isn’t enough to simply follow a teacher’s or coach’s directions.” - Anders Ericsson**



### **mmediate feedback**

*To discover a mental representation that works, you’ll need to test various mental representations during each practice. In order to verify if a representation is effective or not, you’ll need to receive accurate and immediate feedback. The quicker the feedback, the faster you’ll improve your mental representation.*

*Steve knew if his approach was working after each attempt. Imagine if he had to wait 10 minutes before knowing whether the last six attempts were correct...*

**“Without feedback— either from yourself or from outside observers— you cannot figure out what you need to improve on or how close you are to achieving your goals.” - Anders Ericsson**



### **ycling between comfort and discomfort**

*Discomfort is essential to improvement.*

*Approach skill development the same way you approach physical training. Muscles need a period of discomfort (lifting weights just beyond one’s ability) followed by a period of comfort (rest and recovery) in order to grow. Schedule periods of intense focused struggle between periods of rest. Improvement comes from a willingness to push yourself beyond your comfort zone and then getting adequate sleep to engrain the skill and generate insights (expert performers sleep an average of 8.5 hours a night).*

**“Deliberate practice takes place outside one’s comfort zone and requires a student to constantly try things that are just beyond his or her current abilities. Thus it demands near-maximal effort, which is generally not enjoyable.” - Anders Ericsson**



### **xpert coaching from proven performers**

*Expert coaches provide effective mental representations to jump start your progress.*

*But expert coaching also heightens each aspect of the deliberate practice method:*

- *Expert coaches ensure you stay on the right path (they know the path to excellence and intermediate goals to focus on).*
- *Expert coaches add a layer of social pressure and raise the intensity of practice sessions.*
- *Expert coaches provide accurate and immediate feedback because they know exactly what to look for.*
- *Expert coaches push you when you don’t feel like pushing yourself and they know when you’re being pushed too hard.*

**“Deliberate practice develops skills that other people have already figured out how to do and for which effective training techniques have been established. The practice regimen should be designed and overseen by a teacher or coach who is familiar with the abilities of expert performers and with how those abilities can best be developed.” - Anders Ericsson**

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### **The Goal of Deliberate Practice:**

**“Deliberate practice both produces and depends on effective mental representations. Improving performance goes hand in hand with improving mental representations; as one’s performance improves, the representations become more detailed and effective, in turn making it possible to improve even more.” - Anders Ericsson**