Curling delivery routine

A repeatable routine for club practice and games

A familiar routine gives you a clear job before each stone. Practise the decisions and setup until they feel familiar, then keep your attention simple as you deliver. You may still feel nervous or have thoughts. The aim is to spend less of the shot consciously troubleshooting your mechanics. [1, 3, 5]

1 Confirm the call

Before setting up, agree on three things with the person calling the shot:

- **Target:** the aiming broom or other agreed line reference, plus the intended result.
- **Weight:** the speed needed for the called shot. Use your team's shared words or references.
- **Turn:** the requested rotation. Repeat it back if there is any doubt.

Example: “Draw to the top four, this broom, in-turn?” Wait for a clear answer. The aiming broom sets your starting line; it is not necessarily where the stone should finish. For a takeout, confirm the weight and contact point. [2]

2 Picture the shot

Briefly imagine your stone starting on the agreed line, curling as expected and reaching its intended destination or contact point. Recall the pace of a well-thrown shot on this ice. Use a feel or a short phrase if a clear mental picture does not come easily.

3 Settle into your setup

Prepare the stone using the safe method you have been taught, with assistance if needed. Set your alignment and starting position with the setup you have practised. Take one comfortable breath and let it out. Keep your eyes open on the ice. There is no magic number of seconds: use an unhurried rhythm that fits the pace of play.

4 Choose one familiar cue

Try a short cue such as “through the broom.” Say it once to yourself, then put your attention on the agreed target. A cue is a reminder, not a running commentary on every body part. [1, 3]

5 Deliver and communicate

Make the delivery you have practised. After release, give your teammates useful information, such as whether you felt light or heavy. Once the shot is over, collect one useful observation and get ready for your next role.

If the call changes or you are interrupted before starting, pause safely and return to the beginning. Do not rush an unclear shot.

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Picture the shot and reset

Picture something specific

Choose the picture that matches this shot. These are examples to test in practice, not rules for every curler.

- **Draw:** imagine the stone travelling along its expected path and slowing into the called area. Pair that picture with the feel of the required pace.
- **Guard:** picture the stopping distance in front of the house, rather than simply “throwing it light.”
- **Hit:** picture the intended contact point and what should happen to both stones. Confirm the called hit weight first.

Rehearse the shot at a pace that feels like your real delivery. Keep the picture short and believable. When practising off the ice, you can also imagine noticing nerves, following the routine and returning to the target. If images are hard to form, a few clear words and a remembered feeling are useful alternatives. [1, 4]

Give yourself one job during delivery

Choose one cue with your coach and try it for a practice set. “Through the broom” directs attention to the line. “Smooth” can remind you of an overall rhythm. Choose what helps you act, and avoid piling on several cues at once.

Technical practice still matters. Work on grip, alignment, balance or release with an instructor, then practise using the routine with that change. During a game, use a familiar cue rather than trying to rebuild the whole delivery in motion. Beginners may need more conscious setup checks while the movement is still being learned. [3]

Reset after a miss

1. Notice the feeling. “I'm frustrated” is enough; you do not have to argue with it.
2. Name one fact. “It finished heavy” is more useful than “I always miss.” Ask teammates what they saw before deciding why.
3. Choose one response. Agree on any adjustment to the next call or weight reference. Leave a major technique change for practice.
4. Return to the game. Take a comfortable breath, use a simple phrase such as “next job,” and support the next stone. [2, 6]

A made shot can contain a delivery error. A missed shot can follow a good routine. Learn from both without judging the routine by one result.

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Practise under pressure

Practise on ordinary stones before asking the routine to hold up on a big one. These are original HouseCall exercises. Shot counts are flexible, not a tested dose.

Start with a routine rehearsal

Throw six achievable draws using the full routine. Ask a partner to observe without interrupting. Record whether you followed the sequence and where each stone finished. Change one thing between sets if needed.

Mix up the calls

Alternate a draw, guard and comfortable hit. Have a partner call target, weight and turn. Repeat the call, picture that shot and use the same routine. Keep the order of preparation familiar.

Add a little consequence

Play a six-stone challenge. Name a realistic success area before each throw. Award one point for following your routine and a separate point for the result. Let a teammate watch, or make the last stone a “need one to win” scenario. Keep it supportive, without punishments or unsafe distractions.

If pressure makes you rush, make the task easier, rebuild the sequence and try again.

Works with your way of delivering

Use the mental sequence for a slide, upright stick or seated delivery. An instructor can adapt the setup and cue to your movement and equipment. Follow your format’s starting-position and release rules. Keep learning the technique too.

Six stone practice log

Date _____ Shot or challenge _____

My cue _____

Stone	Routine followed Yes or no	Result and one useful observation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

What stayed steady? _____

One thing for the next set _____

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My personal routine

Keep your version short enough to remember. Try it in practice, review it with a coach or teammate, and keep what helps.

My name _____ Date _____

How I confirm target, weight and turn

The picture, feel or words I use before the shot

My familiar setup steps and one cue

What I do if I am interrupted before delivery

My reset phrase and next action after a miss

When I will practise this again

Sources and further reading

1. Ontario Curling Council, Glenn Paulley (2016). The importance of the preshot routine.

2. Curling Canada (2015). House Call: Don’t skip out on skipping.

3. Ong, Bowcock & Hodges (2010). Manipulations to the Timing and Type of Instructions to Examine Motor Skill Performance Under Pressure. doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2010.00196

4. Milley & Ouellette (2021). Putting Attention on the Spot in Coaching: Shifting to an External Focus of Attention With Imagery Techniques to Improve Basketball Free-Throw Shooting Performance. doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.645676

5. Mesagno & Mullane-Grant (2010). A Comparison of Different Pre-Performance Routines as Possible Choking Interventions. doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2010.491780

6. Curling Canada, Kyle Paquette (2022). Paralympic Blog - Day 5.

Sources checked October 10, 2026. Links do not imply endorsement.

Primary studies here tested disc throwing, basketball or Australian football. These curling exercises apply those ideas; they are not proof that this exact routine will improve every player’s results.

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