

POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

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*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly*



CONSISTENT PRE-SHOT ROUTINE

by Joan King

In every sport, it is necessary to prepare your mind as well as your body for consistent performance. In using a *consistent* pre-shot routine you are preparing yourself mentally and physically to hit the best possible shot of which you are capable. If you are not using a consistent routine for every shot, you are missing a valuable asset to your game, especially on pressure shots.

When you are standing behind the ball, looking down the fairway, that is the time to take a few extra seconds to prepare your mind for the results you want. Most golfers seem to take a cursory look down the fairway, line up with the ball, and then *appear frozen over the ball trying to remember what they want to do*. Instead of taking this time over the ball struggling with your thoughts, take those few seconds behind the ball to prepare your mind first.

When you watch an engrossing movie or a play, your attention is focused on the drama. In the same way, planning for your next golf shot can be just as engrossing.

Consistency is accomplished by focusing on the steps that will get you ready. The shot will hold your attention if you lead up to it with a consistent pre-shot routine. When you are this focused, you are not distracted by outside noises and your mind is too busy to listen to negative thoughts. As you approach the end of the routine you will have built up a rapt desire of *wanting to swing* the golf club toward your target.

A preparation routine is used in every sport to prepare the athlete for his/her performance. It keeps the athlete engrossed in the moment and his/her thoughts away from the pressure of the results. It is a signal to the unconscious mind to get ready to perform.

When you watch gymnasts, ice skaters or divers perform intricate maneuvers of their bodies in mid air, you know that they do not have time to think about what they are doing. What they do have is a strategy to activate those maneuvers.

Athletes train their minds to do the same thing in sequence over and over until it becomes a habit. They then activate the sequence by a trigger thought to start the process.

Basketball players bounce the ball on the foul line. Baseball pitchers go through the same "touching" ritual every time they throw a pitch; first the cap, then the shirt, and finally a shrug of the shoulders. Tennis players bounce the ball a certain number of times before serving.

These "routines" are the maps that give direction to your brain about where you want to go.

When you "lose your swing" on the golf course, you need to go back to the routine because you have deviated from your map and are going in a different direction and getting a different result. Some of these deviations are fear thoughts of avoiding hazards, fear of embarrassment, fear of failure, frustration at slow play, annoyances with other players, weather conditions and anxiety about your performance or your score. Your focus is then on the distractions and not preparing your mind and body for the shot.

I like to think of the pre-shot routine as actions that move you from behind the ball to the place over the ball where you are eager to swing. When you are concentrating well you are **not** thinking. You are totally absorbed in the routine process.

Steps for Developing a Successful Routine

Behind the Ball:

1. Do all your thinking before you get over the ball. Do all your planning while you are standing behind the ball looking at your target. Your conscious mind can think, judge, analyze and solve the problem of what club to use. Once

you have decided on the club, it is mandatory that you believe that it is the perfect club for the distance and shot you want to hit. *Indecision is the enemy of golfers.*

2. Breathe deeply to slow down your brain and body. Take in a long, slow, deep breath expanding your diaphragm on the inhale, hold the breath for as long as you comfortably can to allow the warm air to relax your mind and muscles, and then exhale twice as long as you inhaled. A deep breath serves to reduce tension as well as oxygenate the blood so the muscles can function efficiently. Breathing deeply will slow down your brain wave activity so you can focus easily.
3. Visualize the Trajectory of the Shot. If you aren't able to visualize the shot, remember the last great shot you hit with that club. Make these images clear and vivid in every detail as you experience the ball flying to your target. The clearer the image the more powerful directions you send to your brain. (SEE IT!)
4. Take a Practice Swing. Feel your swing tempo either by taking practice swings or by sensing in your mind how it would feel. (FEEL IT!)
5. Pick an Intermediate Target. Perfect alignment is attained by selecting an intermediate target in front of your ball to line up the grooves on your club perpendicular to your target line. Pick a spot or imagine a spot about two feet in front of your ball on your intended target line. This is an important step in your routine to make sure that your body is aligned correctly. You can have the most perfect swing in the world, but if you aren't properly aligned to your target you will get poor results. Always pick your intermediate target from behind the ball so you are using both eyes to determine an accurate target line.

Now that you have programmed your brain to communicate with your muscles to create the shot you want, it is time to switch into the automatic habit function of your brain. Once you have 100% prepared your mind, you are ready to move to the ball.

It is now time to switch off your analytical, logical, thinking part of your brain, and trust that your unconscious has received the map and directions and is ready to drive you to your destination. (TRUST IT!)

Over the Ball:

1. Keep your Eyes on your Intermediate Target. As you move over the ball, keep your eyes trained on your intermediate spot. Draw a line from the spot to your club. Imagine a parallel line and put your feet on that parallel line. Once you have done this, don't move your feet. When you look up at your actual target, it will appear to have moved since you are now looking out of one eye instead of two.
2. Stop thinking and use your senses. It is now time to switch off your analytical, logical, thinking part of your brain, and trust that your unconscious has

received the map and directions and is ready to drive you to your destination. (TRUST IT!)

3. Waggle to begin the swing. Relaxation and the release of tension are the keys to switching off your thinking brain. Now is the time to take a good deep breath to relax and loosen your muscles. As you get comfortable over the ball by waggling your body or club, focus in on your target and put the target picture in your "mind's eye".
4. Activate your swing key. Just before you swing use a swing key to "activate" the swing you desire. Your swing key is a word or feeling that you have associated with your swing when you practiced.
5. Swing to the target. As you come to the end of the routine, you are then totally engrossed in the process of the routine, which has built you up to a feeling of *really* wanting to swing the golf club. (ENJOY IT!)

Under USGA rules, 45 seconds are allowed a golfer get the ball into the air when it is his/her turn. If you follow this procedure, you will be more decisive, focused and take less time to prepare because you will know exactly how to prepare your mind and body.

SEE IT! FEEL IT! TRUST IT! ENJOY IT!

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance

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