

MINN GAMES

You have to keep your head in the game to play good golf, so sharpening your focus will help accomplish that goal

We live in an instantaneous society where attention spans are dwindling by the second. Our meals can be ready in six minutes; our messages are 140 characters or less; our computers are roadrunner fast. Our rounds of golf? Five hours, give or take. Hold on, hold on. Don't panic. You don't have to tunnel vision the entire time. But if you want to play better, a little concentration is in order. Some of the best players of each generation – Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods, for example – had a laser-like focus that contributed to their many titles. You'll never be able to play like them but you can occasionally act like them on the course. Here are some quick tips to help.

CLEAR YOUR HEAD



In order to play at a high level you have to stay focused and sharp mentally. You have to keep your head clear and concentrate only on things you can control. It doesn't matter what your opponent does or what you did the last time on a certain hole. You need to focus on what shot to play and then executing it with complete confidence. If you're good at this it shouldn't matter whether you're in the club championship or on the 16th hole at TPC Scottsdale during the Phoenix Open. The noise around you might be different but the noise in your head should always be the same.

SCOTT HEYN, PGA General Manager, Black Gold Golf Club

GIVE ME A BREAK



Golfers need to develop a mental switch that allows them to turn their focus on and off throughout a round. The switch should be on before a pre-shot routine and then briefly switched to off after each shot. Thinking too much about your game can lead to bad shots coming down the stretch. The key is to not start focusing until you're standing behind the ball. Once there, visualize your shot outcome, then step in and execute. Breaking your focus into 20- and 30-second intervals will help you feel less mentally exhausted at the end of the round.

STEVE KAESE
PGA Director of Instruction
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FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Nutrition is often overlooked when it comes to focusing on the golf course. Eating a balanced meal of lean protein, healthy fats and good carbohydrates is recommended, so a hot dog and potato chips at the turn won't cut it, guys. Hydration also is important for focus. A good rule of thumb is to drink half your body weight in ounces of water daily. Sip cool water on each hole during your round and periodically snack on nutrition bars, nuts, dried fruit, apples or beef jerky. For a good guide on nutrition and golf, see progolflesson.com/nutrition.pdf.

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STAY IN THE GAME



It's crucial to regroup quickly after a bad hole. Here are a few ways to

get back on track.

- You are probably agitated. Take three deep breaths, shrug your shoulders a few times and walk slowly to the next tee.
- Repeat this mantra: "The past is the past, the present is before us, now let's make some history."
- Play your next hole conservatively, but aggressive. Play to your strengths and to the center of the green. A birdie is great, but a par gets you back on track. Whatever you do, stay committed to your game plan.
- Remember that the game is only a game you chose to play. Refocus your negative energy toward finishing your round like a champion.

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