

Acquiring the Correct Mental Game That Will Last Through to the Final Hole

Golf is a challenging game that tests you in more than just one way. While your physical prowess is called to test, so too is your technical expertise and finesse. In tandem, these traits each play a role to help you emerge victorious over the greens and fairways.

But golf is hardly just about brawn and other physical aspects. No – the complete golfer requires more than just that.

To be truly good at the game of golf, there is a certain amount of mental agility that is required. This normally takes the form of imagination, mental fortitude, and the ability to keep focus and maintain concentration no matter what.

In a golfer, such traits are just as valuable as any type of physical prowess.

Everything about golf resonates around this central idea. Every area of your performance quite literally depends on it as has been shown time and time again. Even professionals require a mental edge in order to be able to be competitive.

Gaining this type of mental power that you're going to *need* if you want to get far in golf is not the easiest thing in the world. Matter of fact, it could be argued that it is harder to acquire than the basic skills that you need.

For this reason, many beginners choose to put it off as something that can be done on some other day, at some point in the future.

Without a doubt, this is the *wrong* thing to do. While sure, you might be able to get a few decent shots off in practice, and maybe even manage a fairly okay score for a hole or two, if you ever want to play a full round of golf, you're going to find yourself severely disadvantaged.

Within this guide, you're going to find some of the best ways to get yourself mentally equipped to deal with even the most demanding situations in golf.

But we're not going to just throw you into the deep end of the pool and hope that you learn to swim out of it. Oh, no, we'll actually be taking you through the entire process, and helping you to lay down a mental foundation which you know you'll be able to count on, even when the going gets tough.

Armed with that, you'll be ready to take on whatever challenge you may face in golf.

Naturally, this isn't going to be a walk in the park, but truth be told, few things that are worthwhile are ever *easy*. That said, we're going to be making it as simple as possible for you to follow this guide while it prepares you mentally for what you're going to be facing on the golf course.

Think you're ready to get started?

Discovering the Mental Requirements of Golf

Before we get into the tougher parts of the guide, let's start off with something that is really not too out of the ordinary: A look at what the mental requirements for golf really are.

By this we don't mean things such as a minimum IQ score or anything like that, but rather, how exactly your game is influenced by your state of mind, and what type of mentality you'll need to excel at golf.

Of course, if we wanted to be completely general, it might be possible to get away by saying that you need to have a strong mind to play golf. Unfortunately, this type of statement doesn't really help you, does it?

Therefore, it would probably be a good idea to start with some basics, and then move on to more specific qualities.

Back in our introduction, we actually dealt with some mental qualities that will be needed by golfers, and one of them was keeping focus. It should go without saying that this is a very important part of golf, especially during shots that require any amount of precision (which is, of course, most of them!).

Equally, we'd mentioned imagination, and well, you might not see how that applies to golf – but it really is one of the cornerstones of a good game. Imagination is what you're going to be using to plan out your shots, and 'see' the path of your putts before you even pick up the golf club to make the swing.

Without imagination, you'd find that you have a very tough time indeed.

Next up was mental fortitude. Certainly, it is easy to see how mental fortitude plays a role, considering that you're bound to end up in stressful situations in golf, and how well you're able to manage that stress is going to be crucial to your entire game.

With that, we've basically gone over the three types of mental requirements that we'd mentioned already – but are there any others?

Well, yes, there are. One important one is the ability to stay positive, no matter how many things seem to go wrong on the golf course. As you might realize, this ties in with managing your stress, and more than that, overcoming it.

And really, there are many more qualities, such as developing a winning mindset, setting yourself goals to achieve, being competitive, managing your anger, and quite a number of others.

Honestly speaking, we could be here all day discussing the mental requirements of golf.

At this juncture though, we're going to cut to the chase slightly. Let's just say that golf requires multifaceted mental strengths, and leave it at that for now. Instead, let's move on and just take a peek at why you're going to need some of the requirements that we've mentioned.

Don't worry that you may not exactly have the 'complete' list of requirements – as you'll see a while later, you don't really need it!

So, why are these mental requirements important?

Importance of the Right Mindset and Mentality

Imagine (and yes, that in itself *needs* imagination) that you're about to take your very first drive for the day. Standing there, with your golf club in hand, you've assumed the perfect stance and you're ready to get going.

But, as you swing back your club, you hear a noise in the background, and it breaks your concentration, causing your hands to involuntarily shift as you're bringing them back down to hit the ball.

Needless to say, with your club no longer coming down the way it should, you end up slicing the shot wide, into the tree line.

Does any of that sound familiar? Most golfers, be they beginners or experts, or even professionals, have faced something like that at some point or other. In fact, it happens more often than you might think.

Despite the fact that generally, there aren't that many disturbances on a golf course, there still are bound to be some, and you need to have a concentration that is strong enough to be able to block these out. Focus really is the name of the game.

As you know, that isn't the only part of your mental game that needs to be perfect though.

Going back to our example, having sliced the very first drive badly, and finding yourself in an extremely awful situation, you're bound to be annoyed. Unfortunately, being annoyed is not going to help you.

Instead, due to the fact that you're annoyed, you may even end up making more mistakes. And with each mistake that you make, your stress, pressure, and yes, annoyance, will increase, causing even more mistakes.

End of the day, you find yourself trapped in a cycle, and your *entire* game is ruined as a result.

Every golf player dreads such situations, but few beginners actually are equipped enough with the right type of mindset and mentality to cope with them. And the simple fact of the matter is that this is not the only importance of the mental game.

Contrary to the prevailing popular belief, the right mindset and mentality doesn't just act as a deterrent against unwanted situations like the one we just discussed. If you really and truly practice your mental game, you could turn it into a genuine strength that improves all aspects of your game.

Of course, some of that is fairly straightforward. With immaculate focus and a vivid imagination, you'd be able to ease your way through shot after shot. But more than those strengths, this is where a winning mentality, positive thinking, setting goals, and competitiveness all come into play.

With the qualities that we just mentioned at your disposal, you will find that you begin to show marked improvements in golf.

And as you improve, and go from strength to strength, you'll better avoid some of the more nasty situations, akin to our example above. In short, every golfer should want to do whatever it takes to get into the right mindset and mentality.

Is it difficult to get your mind ticking in the way that you want it to tick? Well, we'd said earlier that it could be pretty tough, and that much is certainly true.

But, with the right approach, you're going to find that it is far from impossible.

From here on out, we're going to begin our discussion on how you can build the right mindset and mentality. For starters, you'll find that a lot of what we discuss really is about building that mental foundation which was mentioned earlier.

Soon enough, we'll move on to more advanced portions though.

Anyway, if you're ready to begin, how about we stop dallying about and get to work giving you the mental game that you desire!

Maintaining Concentration and Keeping Focus

Seeing as this has been one area of the mental game which, as you well know, plays an extremely large role in golf, it seems like a good place to get started. That being said, you should be aware that it is definitely one of the more difficult areas to work on.

But that's just all the more reason for you to start working on it as soon as possible!

During the course of a regular game of golf, there are so many things that will require you to concentrate and focus. In fact, you could probably get away with saying that you'll need to focus on pretty much *everything*.

Being able to block out all unwanted distractions and totally tune in to the task at hand – that's the final goal as far as you're concerned. Admittedly, some of these distractions aren't really physical in nature, but can be mental too.

That's where things start to get a little more involved.

To put it in other words, not being distracted by sounds, sights, smells and sensations... well, these things are all physical, and even though it might not be easy, it is definitely less complicated than blocking out anxiety, annoyance, and stress.

On top of that, many people try to 'concentrate on concentrating' which really isn't very good at all. Ideally, you should be concentrating on whatever you're doing, not concentrating on concentrating.

End of the day, concentrating on concentrating is pretty much just counter-productive.

So how do you learn exactly what you need to be able to concentrate and focus, no matter what is going on around you? Well, as you're going to see, there are a number of things you could do that can help you in that regard.

But before we get to those, you should be aware that concentration and focus is really a wide area to cover, and the truth is, it does tie in to other aspects of your mental game too.

Therefore, as you'll undoubtedly find, further on, even though we might not be discussing concentration and focus specifically, there will be some recommendations that will help you out with it.

Plus, as we just mentioned, some of the things that you're going to want to block out are really mental distractions. As a result, when you deal with your mental distractions, you're actually going to be helping your focus too!

In a nutshell: If you want perfect concentration and focus, improving your mindset and mentality as much as possible is going to help you achieve it.

Shall we begin working on your concentration and focus?

Keeping to a Fixed Routine

Okay, this may not seem to be related at all to maintaining your concentration and keeping focus, but you're about to see that really, in golf at least, it is the best and easiest way to do so. Why? Well, we'll get to that.

Here's how it should work in theory: Routines consist, basically, of just a series of steps that you take on a regular basis. When you translate that into golf's terms, this means that you could have a routine for anything and everything, from taking a drive, to taking a putt, and so on.

For the purposes of this guide, we're going to assume that your technical golf skills are fairly decent, which means that your routines will simply be the way in which you approach each action on the golf course.

So where does concentration and focus come into play?

Well, simply put, your routine is going to have you performing most of the more physical parts of golf, such as gripping the club, assuming the right stance, and making the swing, almost as if on autopilot.

What do you think your mind should be doing while your body is going through these motions?

Rather obviously, you should be focusing on them, and making sure that each step is taken correctly. Having a routine, and keeping to it, is really just the first step – what you *really* need to do is making focus and concentration part and parcel of that routine.

If you can do this, then every time you do anything, you'll be able to lapse into that 'zone' where you're focused completely on the task at hand.

See how you could use this to your advantage? Granted, it is going to take you some practice, time, and effort before you manage to pull it off perfectly, but you should get started as soon as possible, and keep going until you do actually attain that sort of routine.

To start off with, just begin to establish routines. Try to focus while you're doing so, but initially at least, the idea is to get the routines going. As you get your routines going, start to pay more attention to each step along the way.

By doing so, you'll end up helping your focus and concentration along.

Gradually, you will undoubtedly find that you're actually thinking about the routine itself a lot less, and just lapsing into it. The only danger here is that you feel too 'automated' and therefore your mind may start to wander. If it does, be sure to rein it in immediately.

Keep your focus on your task, and slowly but surely, you'll build up a routine that allows you to immediately get into a zone of total concentration. Once you've accomplished that, you're home free.

Blanking Out Your Mind

Previously, we covered how routines can help you maintain concentration, and keep focus. But how do you actually get that concentration and focus in the first place? How do you go from being aware of everything around you, to being able to zoom in simply on the task at hand?

Well, that is a problem that people have been trying to answer for ages.

Frankly speaking, the solution differs from person to person. Some people find it very easy to focus, while others find it close to impossible. Depending on your nature, predisposition, and how you generally deal with situations that require focus, you may find it either amazingly simple, or incredibly tough.

One trick that has been known to work consistently with most people though is to simply attempt to 'blank out' your mind. Or in other words, focus on absolutely nothing at all.

True, it doesn't seem like focusing on nothing is going to solve your problem, but that really is just the very first step. Once you can successfully blank out your mind so that you're not concentrating on anything, or being distracted by anything, then you can take the next step: Starting to focus on only *one* thing in particular.

Needless to say, that one thing should be whichever part of your golf game you *need* to focus on.

See how this could help you gain the kind of focus and concentration that you need? It really is one of the best ways to do so, and the only catch is that you're going to need to be able to do that very first step, i.e. blanking out your mind.

Getting this done could be tricky, but there are a few methods which you could resort to in order to help pave your way to accomplishing it.

For one, practice. Not just on the golf course, but anywhere and anytime that you have a spare moment. Some people find it helpful initially to close their eyes when they first start out to clear their mind of everything else.

Try it, and see if you can. Eventually though, you're going to want to be able to 'blank out' while having your eyes open, so don't get too used to closing your eyes. Use it when you start out, but after a while begin to practice with your eyes open.

Others actually find that things such as meditation can help, though if that's not your cup of tea, don't worry.

Release every outside stimulus, relax, and stop your mind from straying or thinking about anything else. These are the keys to clearing your head, and making yourself ready to focus on your task with total concentration.

If you can attain that, then you'll find that your game improves by leaps and bounds.

Taking Steps Forward in Focus and Concentration

Right, so we've covered the basic foundation that you'll need to be able to focus and concentrate reliably and at will. But that isn't going to be enough until you actually start to take steps forward with it.

Practice makes perfect, and you should constantly be trying to improve your focus and concentration until you reach a point where you find that you're able to zone into the tasks before you with ease.

Don't be put off if you don't achieve this in a short span of time – for some, it takes a lot of effort before they can do so.

If you're the type of person that is naturally easily distracted, then this could be an issue for you. Fortunately, as we mentioned earlier, the other components to a good golf mindset and mentality are going to be helping you out.

As we move on now, you're going to find that a lot of what you learn will mean that you're eliminating many of the common distractions! That should help you out quite a lot when it comes to maintaining your concentration and focus.

Anyway, how about we look at the next topic that we should cover...

Embracing a Positive Mindset and Winning Mentality

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Think about it, and then do it. That's how you end up winning golf games. Of course, there's a little more to it than that, but that's pretty much the ethos by which a positive mindset and winning mentality operates.

Basically, the logic is that if you think about positive things, and winning, then it is going to come true, somewhat like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Be careful though, that does mean that the flipside is equally true, i.e. if you think negatively, you're going to end up in trouble.

While it may seem that this logic is pretty hard to prove, by logic alone, the proof of it lies in just how effective it is.

If you want to look at it in other terms however, then you should consider the fact that no matter what you feel you're thinking about, there is a subconscious part of your brain that is also whirring away simultaneously.

That subconscious does affect what we do, and it is inevitably going to play a role in the final result that you obtain. Therefore, what you need to do is ensure that your subconscious is thinking the right thing, so that the result you obtain will be in line with what you want.

Does that sound like something that you can do?

Frankly speaking, it isn't going to be as easy as it sounds. Doubts and insecurities are a natural part of our thought process, and being able to block them out and instead be only positive is difficult at best.

Anger, too, often ends up playing a large role if you let it get the best of you, and should be avoided at all costs.

Naturally, having a good ability to focus helps, and thankfully, you are already well on your way to attaining that.

As far as a positive mindset and winning mentality goes however, let's take a look at what you could, and should, be doing (or not doing!).

Avoiding Negative Thoughts Entirely

Admittedly, this may seem like something that doesn't need to be discussed, but it is very important, so stay with us on this one.

A lot of the problems that golfers face with negative thoughts arise from misconceptions regarding them. Really, the first question that should be posed, and answered, is a very simple one: What constitutes negative thoughts?

Some types of negative thoughts are very obvious. Thinking that you're going to fail, or that you're going to slice or hook the shot, are examples that number among these more blatant negative thoughts that come to any golfer.

But that isn't the full length and breadth of it all.

How often have you, when faced with say a water hazard, found yourself thinking something along the lines of, “Don’t go in the water hazard,” over and over again. Most people tend to do this, whether consciously or not.

Unfortunately, even this can be the *exact* type of negative thought that you’re trying to avoid!

By thinking about the water hazard, even if you’re thinking about not going into it, some part of your subconscious may immediately latch onto it and, well, the result would be a shot that goes right to it.

It will honestly shock you how often that exact situation happens to golfers.

Now the key to avoiding ever running foul of that type of negative thinking is simple: Focus on what you want to achieve (i.e. the ‘winning’ situation) as opposed to what you *don’t* want to achieve.

Going back to the example that we just discussed, this would mean that instead of thinking something like, “Don’t go in the water hazard,” you’d instead be thinking about getting your ball on the fairway, or to the green.

Soon, we’ll discuss goal-oriented play, and you’ll see how that fits in to all this very nicely.

For now though, it is best that you drill into yourself the habit of thinking about the positive version of events as opposed to the negative. Even when something goes wrong, such as a slice, don’t spend time thinking about it.

Later, you can analyze why you sliced the ball, but when you are about to take the next shot right after the slice, you should be thinking about *that* shot, and where you want it to go. If you do this, you will ensure that you don’t let any negative thoughts about your previous shot get in the way of your subsequent shots.

And guess what, it is a good way to keep your focus and concentration on the task at hand as well.

Now that we’ve covered how you avoid negative thoughts, let’s look at how you can nurture positive ones, by using goals and targets.

Setting Attainable Goals and Targets on the Course

Take note of the keyword here: ‘Attainable’. Having a goal that you want to play like Tiger Woods is great, and it may even spur you to try harder, practice more, and learn everything that there is to know about golf.

But what we want to talk about isn't that. Instead, we want to see how goals and targets can be used to reinforce and achieve a positive mindset and winning mentality. Due to this, every goal that you set needs to be realistic.

How are goals and targets going to help? Well, it really is quite simple. If you set yourself a goal that is pretty achievable, and then you achieve it, you'll naturally feel good about yourself. As you keep on and on doing this, you'll automatically get more confident.

Of course, you're not going to be meeting all your targets, naturally, sometimes things will end up just going wrong. But when they do, if you're able to avoid negative thoughts, and just focus on the next goal or target, you'll bounce back pretty fast.

What these targets actually do for you is simple: By having a set goal that you want to achieve, you're going to aspire towards it. More importantly, you're going to be thinking positively in terms of achieving that goal.

Basically, this sets you on the right track already.

Following that, you'll find that by 'winning' each time you achieve a set target, you'll be reinforcing this mindset. With each positive stride, you'll get more confident, and really begin to embrace that winning mentality that you know is going to be a great help to your golf.

Trying to find the right goals to set is something that only you can do though. Ideally, they should be something that you know you can achieve, but at the same time isn't so easy that you gain no gratification by achieving it.

Finding this balance is going to be important, because if your targets aren't challenging enough, you'll probably dismiss them as being irrelevant, and that will mean that any chance of positively reinforcing your mindset will vanish.

Try setting goals and targets for yourself as often as possible. In time, you'll realize that they not only help your winning mentality, but they also serve as a good 'game plan' for each and every hole of golf that you play.

To accomplish this, you're going to need to be able to tap into your imagination somewhat, and really visualize your game. Don't worry, we'll discuss this soon enough, right after we just say a few final words about positive mindsets.

Growing More Confident In Your Own Ability

As you put into action some of what we've talked about, you'll find that you slowly but surely gain more confidence in your own ability. This, really, is the hallmark of a great winning mentality.

But while you will inevitably get more confident, be wary that you don't get overconfident, or you'll find that you end up taking risks that you really shouldn't take, and making mistakes due to careless errors.

In short, you need to temper your positive and winning mindset with a realistic imagination.

Yes, imagination is really starting to come into play now, as you can see, and so it is about time we covered it, and its implications on your golfing.

For now, just remember the key elements of being positive and you'll reap the rewards that come with doing so.

Tapping Into the Power of Imagination

Very early on, we already mentioned that imagination was going to be one of the key parts of your mental game that you should work on. However, we really do need to discuss what exactly you'll need your imagination for.

Now, seeing as you're a golfer, you're going to need to harness your imagination in a very golf-specific manner. Basically, you don't need the same type of imagination that an artist would have, nor do you need to be able to conjure up images in your mind of flying castles, dragons, angels, or anything like that.

What you do need your imagination for is one very simple, yet very powerful act: Visualization.

Essentially, visualization is the ability to 'see' something. Applying this to golf, and what you get is the ability to 'see' the result of a shot, or 'see' how you're going to get your ball from the tee to the hole, or 'see' how you're going to get yourself out of a particularly annoying bunker.

If you can visualize any of those, or better yet, all of them, then you're on the right track, but that is just half of it. Now, anyone with a vivid enough imagination could, naturally, visualize their ball soaring over the fairway, to the green, and landing directly in the hole.

But this isn't going to be very helpful, in fact, you could even say that it is way too imaginative to be helpful.

No – what you're going to need to accomplish is to temper your imagination with not just reality, but also just how much you can realistically achieve. If you know your strengths, weaknesses, and literally every aspect of your own game, then you'll be able to 'see' what really could, and should, happen.

Achieving this takes experience. Not only do you need to spend time playing, but you need to become very aware of your own abilities. In itself, that is a challenge, and it is one that only experience can answer.

There is one method in particular that you can use to help yourself along though, so let's look at how you'd get started building that kind of realistic, imaginative visualization that you want!

Gathering Experience while Visualizing Shots

Before we start, you should know that there really are no two ways around requiring enough self-knowledge to be able to realistically visualize your shots, and plan out your game. But, while you're out there gathering that experience which you'll need, there's no reason why you can't practice your visualization in the process.

In essence, this means that you'll be going for a two-in-one approach; instead of waiting around till you know enough about your shots to visualize their outcome.

Don't be disheartened if you can't do this with any form of accuracy at first. Learn from it. Watch the path that your golf ball actually follows, as opposed to what you visualized its path would be.

Going about things in this manner will mean that you tend to notice the path your shots take a lot more, and you're able to connect that path with the type of shot you were taking in terms of its power, direction, style, and so on.

Establishing this connection will give you a firm grounding, and as time progresses, you'll understand your shots a lot better, and therefore be able to visualize better too.

Keep at it! At the end of the day, the rewards of being able to really tap into your imagination to visualize the potential paths that your shots could take are worth the effort that you put into it.

Forming the Complete Mental Game

Considering the mental game of golf is so vast, and so all encompassing, it may seem that we're just scratching the surface. In a way, it's true; we have just scratched the surface. But at the same time, you will find that what we've done is more than just that.

How is that? Well, people differ, and each person has their own temperament, their own way of thinking, and their own strengths and weaknesses.

Acquiring the perfect mental game is therefore, naturally, something that varies from person to person too. But what you have learnt this far, well, that's going to help you to actually form your own mental game.

Everything that we've discussed caters towards the specific challenges that a golfer faces. If you notice, it really is all interconnected. Now what you need to do is apply it all, and you should find yourself in a position to really take advantage of what the game of golf has to offer.

If you're able to quell those insecurities, and doubts, then you'll be able to deal with the mental stress that golf can sometimes bring about. At the same time, you'll also find it a lot easier to focus and concentrate on what you should be thinking about.

When that happens, and your mind is clear, you'll even find that you're able to visualize your shots better.

See how it all interrelates?

What you now have is a firm foundation. What you need to do with it is build on it a little further so that you can actually form a mental game. That is where you're going to need just a little more help.

Addressing Your Weaknesses

Each and every one of us has weaknesses. We may not like to admit that we do, and we may even prefer to ignore them or pretend that they don't exist, but the truth is, that doesn't make them any less real.

Part of acquiring the right mentality in golf is to address those weaknesses, or at least the ones that apply to your game. For example, if you're scared of heights, that isn't very likely to apply to golf.

But on the other hand, if you have performance anxiety, then that might actually play a role.

Depending on the weakness you have, you will find that you already have the tools that you need to deal with it. Going back to our example of performance anxiety, well, you should notice that what you've learnt about positive thinking and goal-oriented reinforcement is going to help you tackle that.

Incidentally, it also will help tackle any problems you have with nerves, or simply low confidence levels.

Dealing with your weaknesses, whatever they are, should be a distinct priority, as by improving them, you will improve both your mental game, and overall golf game, that much faster.

Relax and Enjoy the Game

As your mental aptitude for golf increases, you'll automatically find that you are more able to relax during the game. Of course, this does not mean that you should stop thinking altogether, or that your mind will be able to take a break while you play.

Quite the opposite – it simply means that you'll become more and more accustomed to the game, and your mentality will be stronger and more adjusted to coping with it.

It is this feeling of being relaxed and completely comfortable with every aspect of your game that is most sought after by every golfer. In many ways, it is regarded as being the pinnacle of the game.

By adapting what you have learnt, and using it during your game, you'll find that slowly but surely you'll approach this goal. It is also probably a good idea that you remember that the mental game is not the only part of your game that you should work on.

Improving your technical, physical golf skills is important too.

If you can increase your physical and mental ability in tandem, then one will, without a doubt, affect the other, and both will be stronger as a result. With all the improvements to your ability, you'll also find that your confidence soars, and you begin to trust your swing more.

In turn, these mental improvements will translate into generally playing an overall better game.

Now you have the tools, the knowledge, and everything that you need to acquire the mentality that all great golfers have. Go out there, and start applying what you've learnt!

Conclusion

Stick to your guns when it comes to your plans to attain the best possible mental game. At times, you may question whether or not it is worth the effort, and if you ever do, simply think of the rewards that await you once you've accomplished what you set out to do.

Don't be discouraged. Every golfer of any decent standard has been through exactly the same thing at some point or other, and if you stick to it, you will emerge as a much better golfer.

So, don't waste any more time just sitting here and reading about what you should be doing. It is now most definitely the time to take action, and get started with your mental game.

Grab your golf clubs, and head over to the course right now!

Have fun golfing!