

"In the Zone" for Two Minutes: Specific Seconds to Play your Best Golf

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Can you concentrate for two minutes during a round of golf? If you're a scratch player, two minutes is all you need; add thirty seconds if 80 is your average. The critical time is the precious couple of seconds just prior to action. During that time, being focused on a *very specific* method, command or directive thought consumes the conscious mind and sets the stage for the subconscious to act – to execute the swing or stroke successfully. This mental technique is the basis for **Specific Thinking**.



Specific Thinking is a routine of conscious focus – a concise and consistent thought or command immediately prior to making the golf swing or putting stroke. It's a two to three second routine embedded in the player's pre take-away. This technique gives the conscious mind something to do while the subconscious mind is free to execute and swing the club or stroke the putt.

A few seconds per shot adds-up to only two minutes of intense concentration for the entire round. So what do you think about the rest of time? It just doesn't matter what you think of. You see, we expend so much energy trying to ignore this thought or that. Mentally fighting for four hours on blocking out the negative – trying desperately to "stay in the moment" and "think positive" can be an exhausting and futile effort.

Think about whatever comes to mind – don't pretend to ignore it. Your score, position in the tournament, an impending shot, your anxiety . . . acknowledge that these things run through your head. It's really quite liberating. Let those thoughts go until you place the club-head behind the ball. At that point – in those seconds – your complete attention and focus is on your specific thought.

These critical seconds **are not** to be occupied by thoughts of being in a meadow of flowers or imagining the surf on some tropical beach. They are to be consumed by a concise, effective physical command.

Ok . . . How do you do this? Once you've calculated the distance, club and shot or, if putting, the line, established speed and break, you are ready to begin your conscious routine. You initiate by setting up for practice swings/strokes enabling grip and posture. When you place the club-head or putter head behind the ball and settle into your stance, the specific seconds begin: **Intense focus on a single command that you develop and absolutely believe in. It will be something you can easily visualize and are convinced helps produce your best action.** Example:

- *Specific Swing Thought; clubhead inside hands, this occupies the conscious so that the subconscious mind can freely execute the technical action or habit.*
- *Specific Putting Thought: push back - pull through; this occupies the conscious mind so that the subconscious mind can execute on the information your eyes and intellect gathered when you read the putt. Now watch the ball roll on your line and into the hole.*

In short, consciously replacing random (often negative) outcome thoughts during the crucial few seconds prior to action will give control to the subconscious so that it can execute instinctively. The mental cue occupies the conscious mind (which is capable of only one thought at a time) so that it cannot interfere with the stroke process executed by the subconscious.

Remember, your specific thinking should only be two to three seconds – beyond that the mind can go anywhere and it's usually not good. Having the discipline to do this on every shot ensures focus in the present (conscious) and to make a consistent swing motion or stroke (subconscious).

The majority of your time on the golf course should not be spent in a mental battle with yourself. Pretending to block out thoughts that obviously exist doesn't make a lot of sense. Deal with them at face value – embrace them.

But within these specific seconds, be disciplined. Do not change your specific thinking routine in mid stream -- stay

consistent. The fastest way to a mental meltdown is to give up on your specific thinking and open the floodgates to an overload of destructive mental static. Specific thinking can become the most beneficial part of your golf game, but it will take time and discipline to make it habit. Allow yourself time to be successful, as the positive results will reinforce your belief system.

All the things your body does to perform physical tasks on daily basis happen naturally and instinctively because they are driven by the subconscious absent of fear and outcome. Your golf swing should happen the exact same way but because golf is not a "reaction" sport, nothing happens until we make it happen the critical seconds must be filled with a proactive and specific thought.

Specific thinking can turn those critical seconds into an advantage and opportunity for your best golf swing to happen naturally and instinctively in only two to three minutes throughout your round.