



What Do I Do Between Shots?

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There is a reason that golf is considered one of the most “mental” sports in the world. It is the fact that much more time is spent thinking than *actual* execution of a skill. If you spend about 25 seconds on your pre-shot routine, 5 seconds hitting the shot, and score around par, you engage in about 30-minutes of actual golf swings. The remaining 3-4 hours are spent thinking, analyzing, dreaming, or being distracted – in other words, a great amount of mental activity. This time period is what I call “the gap.”

The sheer amount of time the mind is *actively* operating during a round of golf can be a good thing when mental activity is effective, but not so when it is negative. A destructive mode of thinking is responsible for losing tournaments, not being in contention, bad shots, double and triple bogeys, anger, frustration, and less feel in the short game to name a few. Most golfers struggle using this large amount of time “thinking” to their benefit. Their minds self-destruct over the shot, during the pre-shot routine, and/or in “the gap.” Well, what is the *right* thing for your mind to be doing in the gap?

Let’s look at some tour players. Ben Hogan would lose himself in self-absorbed concentration in between shots to the point where he was unaware of events and people around him. Jesper Parnevik will work complicated math problems in his head and Nick Faldo would sing to himself. Fuzzy Zoeller and Arnold Palmer would entertain the crowds as a means to relax in between shots. You have to find your own way to manage “the gap.” Some golfers like to talk with playing partners, others like to sing a tune to keep rhythm, and still others enjoy daydreaming about something completely unrelated to golf. And many like to think about the next shot as soon as they start walking toward it. There are no exact “right or wrong” responses when it comes to what to do in the gap, except that it needs to be relaxing, positive, and productive. A round of golf is too long to over-think or over-focus in the gap. You have to know what emotional state you want to maintain (i.e., calm, composed, focused, relaxed, etc.) and then learn what keeps you in this mental space. Again, what to do varies for every golfer. Just know your plan and implement it.

Keys in the Gap

1. Build awareness of ideal emotional mental state (i.e., calm, composed, etc.)
2. Find the activity or lack of activity that maintains this state consistently
3. A variety of things can work

4. Do not over-think or over-focus in the gap