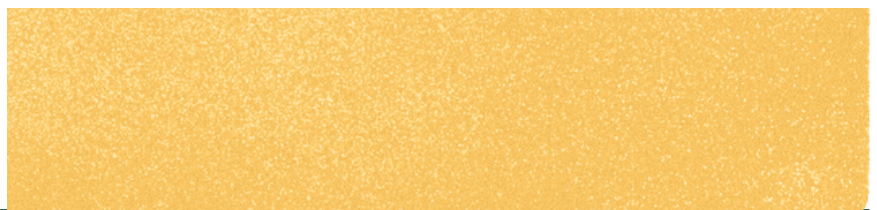




Twelve Steps To Getting Your Mind In The Game

Practice these lessons for 30 days each, building on the previous teachings, and in time, your game will improve



Keith Krueger

Class A Teaching Professional P.G.A. of America

@Copyright 2026 GolfTheMindGame.com

Lesson 1

Visualize

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. Visualization — the art of seeing the shot in the mind's eye — is a must for great golf. The "when" to visualize in golf is a two-part system. One, we must do so before we pull a club from our bag. Two, we must do so again as we pull the trigger for the shot.

The first effort is made to pick the type of shot we are about to play — high, low, runner, flop shot, fade or draw, straight, and so on.

See the shot and commit to it, then make your club choice.

Visualize the exact shot you are about to play. This must be done from tee to green, as well as with the putter. After your mental and physical routine is complete, your second and most vivid visualization comes into play. Just before pulling the trigger, make the shot and swing in the mind's eye — see the ball traveling from A to B exactly as you picture it. Feel the wind and all weather conditions. See the shot traveling exactly as you want it to, all the way to the hole, and going in if possible — after all, that is our goal. See it land and roll, hit and stop. The point is to use visualization to its absolute highest benefit.

Only use the positive. If a negative thought creeps in, stop, reset, and start your visualization over. A clean mental picture is worth far more than a rushed one.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 2

Focus

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. How often do you hit the tough shot, difficult lie, or unbelievable putt so much better than the easy little wedge shot or driver off the tee to a wide open fairway? We all have a tendency to bear down and focus harder when we have put ourselves in a tough situation

Play every stroke like it is the winning stroke.

The mental key here is to carry this ability of hardened focus into our normal or easy shot making. In reality we are narrowing our focus on the tough shot and allowing our focus to be much broader on the easier play. A method to use is as follows: One, play the easy shot as if it were the first of the day. We generally have a very sharp focus on the first tee, and we can recall this focus easily as we begin to play any shot on the course. Two, think of one of those really tough shots you pulled off in the past and relate to the focus used to pull it off. I'm sure all aspects of your pre-shot routine — both physical and mental — were fully engaged.

Every shot deserves your best focus. The easy ones have a way of becoming the most costly when we let our guard down.

Practice this lesson for 30 days



Lesson 3

The Five Items - The Funnel Of Five

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. I know of the Funnel of Five, as I call it — five mental steps that take you from standing behind the ball to pulling the trigger with complete confidence.

Calculations, commitment, feel, visualization, and trust.

These five elements are what I call the Funnel of Five, and together they form your complete mental routine for every shot. Think of them as a funnel — starting broad and narrowing down to a single focused point of execution.

Calculations — Standing behind the ball, assess everything. Distance, lie, wind, slope, and club selection. This is your analytical step.

Commitment — Once your calculations are made, commit fully to the club and the shot. No second guessing.

Feel — During your practice swing, feel the stroke or swing required to execute the shot you have committed to.

Visualization — See the shot traveling exactly as intended, from club face to target, just as we discussed in Lesson 1.

Trust — Step in, trust your preparation, and let her fly. This is not the time for doubt.

Work the Funnel of Five on every shot for thirty days at a minimum and your game will improve. It is a must for the real player.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 4

Use The Force

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. Try this one for thirty days religiously and tell me the results.

After taking your full address position and completing your positive visualization, put a force field around you that does not allow any negative thoughts in.

Every shot — hone in, removing all external distraction.

Think of it as a bubble of positive energy surrounding you from the moment you step into your stance. This field will only allow the ball out on the proper path. Filled with positive energy, it ensures that the shot you are about to hit will come off the club — driver all the way to the putter — exactly the way you want it to. The "force" will not allow distractions, playing partners, noise, or anything else to disrupt the few seconds it takes to play your stroke.

The more you practice this mental bubble, the more natural it becomes. In time, stepping into your address position will automatically trigger your focus and shut out the world around you. That is a powerful place to play golf from.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 5

Practicing

Every round, every chip in the front yard, every swing of the club is practice.

What does purposeful practice look like? Pick a specific target for every shot. Go through your full pre-shot routine — calculations, commitment, feel, visualization, and trust — just as you would on the course. Hit one shot, evaluate it, reset, and go again. Ten balls hit this way will do more for your game than a hundred balls beaten mindlessly into the distance.

Hit only as many balls, chips, and putts as you can follow with this type of focused practice. When the mind begins to become uninvolved, stop. At that point practice becomes more of a detriment than a help. Always remember to practice as if playing.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 6

Putting

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. Putting is said to be the second part of playing golf — you get the ball to the green and a whole new game begins. First, we must approach putting as we would any other part of the game. We must make our calculations as to line and speed, including all factors: wind, grain, uphill, downhill slope, and so on. Second, we must feel the necessary stroke required to play the putt. Third, we must visualize the ball rolling exactly down our chosen line into the cup. This is our mental approach to putting — and if you recognize these steps from the Funnel of Five in Lesson 3, you are already thinking like a player. It is my contention that this mental approach is half the game of putting.

You must have the mental attitude that you are a good putter.

If you continue to feed your brain the idea that you are a good or great putter, your chances of becoming one are greatly increased. If you are one of those who feeds the brain the opposite — I can't putt a lick, or I three putt all the time — your brain will gladly help you accomplish exactly that. You will become a bad, three-putt player.

Putting is as individual as any other part of your game. It is your mental attitude towards it that will allow you to do it well. Increase your belief that you are a good putter and you will become one. Truly believe you can make every putt, or the very next putt if you have just missed. Remember — the pros only make 50% from six feet. Give yourself a break and keep believing.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 7

Temper

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. Their temper, or yours. How many times have you seen it cause the ruin of a round of golf? A person's temper on the golf course has a lot of bearing on their play. The ability to control — or lack of control — of temper is a tremendous part of our golfing experience.

The times a golfing partner has "lost it" has caused us to lose our focus and play poorly. We ourselves "lost it" and there goes our game. All have seen or experienced this many times in our golf outings, even in practice sessions. Here are some of my suggested cures.

We are all going to hit bad shots — the trick is to not hit two in a row.

Get mad! However, you only have five seconds to do so. Count if you must, or allow yourself those five seconds to "go off." Then realize it's over. Time to go back to the game and play. Taking a mental time out from a bad shot is a serious plus to your golf game. Not only will this allow you to enjoy the game you have chosen to play, it will allow you to save many bad shots that would otherwise follow.

Another method is to throw the bad shot away. In your mental game, visualize picking up that poor shot and throwing it into the trash, the lake, the Grand Canyon — wherever you choose. It is gone. Focus entirely on the next shot.

Temper costs strokes. Over the course of a round, the player who moves on quickly after a bad shot will always outlast the one who carries it from hole to hole. Let it go and play.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 8

The Head

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. The topic of head movement is one that is not discussed a lot. Does it move? Should you keep it still, down, and through? It is my opinion that as amateur players we cannot keep our heads down or still enough. This is difficult for any student, amateur or professional alike. It should therefore be a goal for you to remain down and through on every shot for as long as possible.

Think of Freddy Couples. He is one of my biggest examples of staying down and through at impact. Watch how long he keeps his head down and his eyes focused on the impact zone — even as his body rotates through the shot. That is a picture worth carrying in your mind every time you address the ball.

Keep your focus and your head down from backswing to follow through.

If you will carry the image of staying down and through on your swings — from the putter all the way to the driver — for thirty days, you will see an improvement. To answer the question at hand, of course the head moves — it has to. But limiting that movement, and staying down and through at impact, will make you a better ball striker and a more consistent player.

Practice this with focused effort for a minimum of thirty days. It is a total mind game.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 9

Rules

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. Many say the rules were meant to be broken, or that they are unfair in so many ways. But there have to be rules if there are games to be played. Golf is one of the few games where the player is the primary referee — for yourself and for the group you are playing with. The rules can both help you and hurt you in the game of golf. Knowing the rules, how they apply, and when you must apply them — or when you may take relief — is the key to good rules management.

Consider this: a ball that lands in casual water, ground under repair, or certain other conditions entitles you to a free drop. A player who does not know this will play a ball from a terrible lie when they were fully entitled to relief.

Knowledge of the rules is a stroke saver.

My mental edge here is to get a rules book — and a decisions book as well if you desire. The rules book covers the laws of the game, while the decisions book covers real situations and how the rules apply to them. Have them at home at your disposal — the armchair or the so-called "reading room" is the best spot. Study a few each day, get to know the procedures and options available to you, and you will find they make the game easier and more fun to play.

A player who knows the rules has a genuine advantage over one who does not. That is not bending the rules — that is mastering the mental game.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 10

Weather

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. The weather is an ever-changing factor in our golfing experience. It can change from shot to shot, hole to hole, day to day. How we handle the weather — wind, rain, heat, cold, humidity — is a tremendous factor in how we play. Proper weather gear for the bad days is a must, and enough fluids on the hot days are equally essential.

The two major weather patterns I would like to address here are cold and wet. One must remember to dress for this weather, or have the gear along if it blows in during a round. The key here is mental preparation — either before the round or the moment the weather appears while playing. I believe it to be true, and I have seen it time and again — when bad weather hits, over half the field is done.

It becomes an excuse to play bad, a reason to lose focus, and a reason to give up.

The smart player will take advantage of exactly this situation. Being prepared — physically and mentally — to bear down when conditions get tough is one of the greatest edges you can have over your competition. Think about it: if half the field mentally quits when it rains, you have just cut your competition in half simply by staying focused and prepared.

Take this as a one up against your competitors. Have your rain gear, your extra glove, your hand warmers if needed. Walk onto that first tee knowing you are ready for whatever the day brings. Preparation and the ability to bear down when it gets rough out there will keep you in the winner's corner.

Being prepared for the weather and having the proper attire is a basic golf necessity — and a powerful mental advantage.

Practice this lesson for 30 days



Lesson 11

Etiquette

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. Etiquette — the proper conduct to be observed in social, official, or sports situations — is as good a definition as any. Let's make it simpler and just say it's darn good manners.

In golf, etiquette covers a wide range of behaviors on the course. Letting the low score hit first on the tee. The player farthest from the hole plays first. Staying quiet and still while others are hitting. Tending the flag, raking the bunker, repairing your ball mark on the green. These are not suggestions — they are the unwritten laws of the game, observed from the weekend golfer all the way to the Tour professional, right through to the final shot and the handshake at the end of the day. I applaud all those in golf who practice it daily, and I strongly suggest that those who do not — or do not yet know how — get a book and begin the practice.

Good etiquette works hand in hand with the mental side of the game in a number of ways. First, when you conduct yourself properly on the course you project confidence and command respect. You look like you know what you are doing — because you do. Second, when your group practices good etiquette, distractions are minimized for everyone. Golf already has its share of mental challenges without adding unnecessary disruptions caused by poor manners.

Good etiquette is not a physical attribute — it is a mental one.

It reflects your character on the course and your respect for the game. You must practice it at all times, and there is always room to improve.

Practice this lesson for 30 days

Lesson 12

Believing VS. Knowing

The game is often said to be 90% mental; I believe it to be more like 99%. In golf as in life itself, there is a huge difference between believing in something and knowing something. Let me explain.

Believe you are good!

If you believe you are a good putter, that is definitely a lot better than believing you are a bad putter. However, if you just "believe," there is still a doubt lurking underneath. Knowing removes this doubt entirely. It is 100% fact — you must know. When putting or any other part of the game is not going well, that small doubt can easily grow into full-blown disbelief and failure before execution even begins.

Knowing you are a good putter leaves no doubt. Consider a difficult three-foot putt on the final hole with everything on the line. The player who believes they can make it might — but the player who knows they can make it will step in with a completely different presence. That same principle applies to every club in the bag. Driving, iron play, chipping — even the most difficult shot of the day or tournament can more easily be accomplished when we know we can make it. We do not merely believe — we know we have the ability, and we have done this particular shot successfully before.

The art of knowing is a great asset to the game of golf. It is built over time through purposeful practice, preparation, and the consistent application of everything covered in these twelve lessons. Visualize it. Focus on it. Work the Funnel of Five. Use the Force. Practice as if playing. Trust every putt. Control your temper. Stay down and through. Play with good manners. Prepare for the conditions. And above all — know that you can.

Try knowing in your abilities for thirty days at a minimum and see if there is not a wonderful improvement

Practice this lesson for 30 days
