



## Putting well under pressure

A great pre-shot routine will give you the best chance of performing at your best under pressure. Here are a few tips to help you with your putting routine.

1. First of all regardless of how you've been putting, **get yourself into a more confident state**. Get your head up, shoulders back and say to yourself that 'the putting green is my arena' - it's where you do your best work (think about some of your best putts.) March onto the green – it might help to **pretend that you're someone else** – perhaps Tiger! Imagine how confident they would feel about this putt.
2. Look at the hole with '**soft eyes**'. By this I mean using 'peripheral vision', rather than an intense stare. When you stare intensely at something, it's likely that adrenalin is released – in some situations this is useful (i.e. if a saber tooth tiger is about to attack you), but when you're putting you want to be more relaxed.

Peripheral vision exercise: Practice looking at things in this more relaxed way at home by focusing on a spot on a wall just above eye level and then noticing the floor, ceiling and around you without moving your eyes. Then use this when lining up putts and also when walking / waiting in-between shots to stay relaxed.

3. Focus on getting the ball into the hole. Not 'close'. **Your aim is to hole the putt, not to avoid three-putting**. (As per my previous articles in my blog about how you get what you focus on...). Here are a couple of good visualization tips:
  - Imagine the ball hitting the back of the cup solidly on an uphill putt
  - Imagine the ball dropping over the front edge of the cup on a downhill putt.

4. As you're having a look at the path that your ball is going to roll into the hole, **always go with your first instinct**. This is your unconscious reaction and it will be better than any conscious effort to work out a different path or weight.
5. As you address the ball take a **slow deep breath** in and out and remember to have **soft hands**. Keep the **weight in the balls of your feet, and your stomach** (not in your head!) so that you are balanced and centred.
6. **Keep practice strokes to a minimum** - ideally one or none. The reason that you want to minimise the time over the ball is that the longer you take, the more your conscious mind will try to get involved, leading to tension and a lack of feel. Keep the routine short and more of a reaction to the shot. Have one or a maximum two looks at the hole and stroke the ball into the hole. (Easy!)
7. **Keep your head still for a couple of seconds after you've hit the putt**. Looking up too quickly can cause you to shift and this is often caused by focusing on the outcome, rather than the stroke at hand.

Here is a summary of a great putting routine without the explanations:

1. Keep your head up and tell yourself: **"I love putting - this is my arena!"**
2. **Look at putts with 'soft eyes'**.
3. Visualise the ball going into the hole.
4. Go with your **first instinct** for the path / weight.
5. Make sure your **weight** is in the balls of your feet and your stomach. **Take a deep breath into your stomach**, then trust that your unconscious can sink the putt.
6. **After your final look at the hole begin your putting stroke immediately**.
7. **Keep your head down / still** for a couple of seconds.