



A.C.E. (Analyze – Commit – Execute)

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What you do in preparation for a shot, both physically and mentally, along with the consistency to this pre-shot routine is crucial and directly relates to the consistency of your results. Having a sound routine on the course is of the utmost importance. It is your foundation and what you rely on during every situation in golf. Some of those situations include first tee jitters, a pressure-packed putt, a must up-and-down and any other imaginable circumstance.

A routine, while often overlooked by the golfing public, is where the pros and top amateurs find comfort and confidence. Doing your routine thoroughly and completely will allow you to let go of any undesirable result with more ease. Your routine is a component to the game that should be practiced and yet created with a touch of individualization. There are many different processes that you will see when watching the world's top golfers and it is their pre-shot ritual that allows them to perform so well in what seems to be the most anxious of times. Begin to watch what great golfers do before they hit the ball. They hit quality shots but it is their preparatory skills, physically and mentally, which propels them, and what can propel you, into quality golf.

Three areas of a routine you can look to develop include the following:

- **ANALYZE:** this is where you evaluate all of the factors that go into choosing the appropriate target, shot and club. These factors sometimes don't allow you to hit the shot you'd like to hit and sometimes you find yourself in a predicament in which you're not sure what to do. Those unsure situations are ones to remember and go over with your teaching professional or at the least, recreate in practice so that you can find a way to hit the shot. Regardless, you want to do a complete evaluation of things like the lie of the ball, elevation change, wind speed and direction, location of hazards and obstacles so that you can find an appropriate target, the yardage to your intended target, et cetera. This evaluation will aid in making the best decision when looking for a target. Choose the appropriate club and hit the type of shot that you know you can hit.
- **COMMIT:** this is the few seconds just before you hit the shot and where you need to create your own trigger that confirms you're in a beneficial frame of mind and ready to swing. One of my students says that he sees a "runway" from his ball to his target just before he swings. This personal cue tells him that he's focused and not distracted. Matter of a fact, most people who find themselves in this committed mindset state that they don't hear or see distractions and don't think about the realm of possible results except the best one. They're fully committed and that's a healthy way to play golf. Jack Nicklaus said he never hit a shot until he could see where he wanted it to go before he hit it.

A high handicapper will be surprised at how often the mind will make the muscles hit the ball to the target, even with a far less than perfect swing. -- Harvey Penick

Other people have commitment triggers that are verbal. They say something positive to themselves just before taking the club back. Others sense a great shot. They may feel or imagine themselves hitting the shot almost seeing themselves actually in the position that will cause the desired shot. Additionally, some golfers actually envision the shot in the air and landing just as planned. Some golfers count and when they get to a certain number they swing. There are many commitment triggers but only you can come up with one that suits your playing style. Find one yourself during practice or better yet, while practicing on the course.



- **EXECUTE:** execution is simply swinging the club. There is virtually no time that takes place between the time you become committed and the time you swing. You should only back away if distracted, if the elements change or if you realize that you're not fully 100 % committed. Golfers commonly blame distractions as the reason for poor shots. But they only have themselves to blame. It is your shot and your responsibility. No one else is to blame for the shots you hit. Back away and gather yourself if needed. The best level of commitment is one that engrosses you so much in your shot that you don't even notice the distractions that are around you. Additionally, being so into your shot allows you to disregard poor shots. It helps puts them behind you and drastically aids your ability to bring a clear and focused approach to your next shot.

Golf will always have some degree of inconsistency. Less inconsistency is what all golfers are striving for. What you do physically and mentally before, during and even after each shot will sharpen your attitude, enhance your game and bring some consistency to both.

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