

VISUAL SKILLS REQUIRED FOR **GOLF**

Concentration

There are many challenging aspects to the game of golf and factors such as weather, course conditions, or recovering from a ball that lands in a sand trap, for example, are out of your control. The ability to stay focused and maintain peak performance levels, even during adverse conditions, is critical.

Depth Perception

If you consistently over- or under-estimate the distance to your target, poor depth perception may be the reason. When trained properly, depth perception acts as a valuable aid in estimating yardage and in selecting the proper club.

If you don't estimate the distance correctly, assessing the green as well as making the correct putt will be difficult. You may have a tendency to either hit the ball too short or too long and possibly too much to the left or right.

When hitting the ball, it is also important to have your dominant eye facing forward. If you are using your non-dominant eye as your aiming eye, it will be the one primarily measuring the distance and 'signaling' to the brain. If your dominant eye is not quite optimized, it will lead to a shifting of the estimation of distance.

Eye-Hand/Foot/Body Coordination

The ability to interpret visual input and then to successfully coordinate hand, foot and associated body movements is an important part of most sports because it affects both timing and body control. Watching a professional golfer tee off, you will see that all muscles work in concert with one another, producing one fluid movement, as he/she makes the downswing, hitting the club head perfectly on the ball and continuing follow-through to complete the circle. This is often referred to as the "connection theory" and is a result of good eye-hand-body coordination.

Fixation Ability

The ability to fine focus on a target, quickly and accurately, using a series of eye movements, is another key visual skill for golfers. Properly focusing on the ball and the target, whether three feet or 300 yards away is essential in making good contact between the club head and the ball. Fine focusing techniques can help both in hitting the sweet spot and stroking a smoother putt.

Focusing and Tracking

The ability to effectively shift focus near and far is particularly linked to putting performance. A player often misses a putt because he or she doesn't read the proper break. Also, if the eye muscles are not correctly coordinated, pursuing the ball with the eyes in the downfall will be difficult. The ball will appear to be there, only to 'vanish' and then re-appear.

Peripheral Awareness

Being aware of the primary target (the ball) while simultaneously knowing where you want to direct the ball with your club is obviously an important skill to master.

Visualization

Goal-oriented visual imagery techniques are often used to help develop consistency in performance. Simply stated, if you can imagine yourself performing a proper swing often enough you will tend to actually perform the swing in a like manner. Many trainers have their students practice with their eyes closed while visualizing the path they want the ball to take.