



Play Your Best Pool

By Phil Capelle

Awaken Your Awareness

This is an excerpt from Phil Capelle's forthcoming book of practice exercises and techniques for learning pool. Capelle is the author of "Play Your Best Pool" and several other instructional books on pool. He has been actively involved in pool for the last 37 years and is a Certified Instructor with the Billiard Congress of America. Visit Phil at billiardspress.com

It is important to get in the necessary repetitions to learn each shot, but quantity alone won't do it. What is even more important is the level of awareness that you bring to each and every shot. **When you are in tune with the process of playing pool shots, you are open to receiving the feedback that is so valuable to building memory on your good shots, and in making the necessary corrections on your errant ones.**

When you are totally results oriented and you miss a shot, the tendency is to get upset immediately at the miss, which blocks or replaces the feedback that could have informed you of the reasons for your mistake. If you continue with that response to missed shots and you let your frustration build, you will continue to commit the same errors and your game will be stuck where it's at.

Become Process Oriented

When you are relaxed and your mind is tuned into the process of playing pool shots, incorrect moves like tension in your wrist, or the tendency to overcut a certain shot because of deflection will begin to jump out at you. If you miss a certain shot, you will begin to notice which side of the pocket the ball hits. You may then discover that you are using too much english on that shot, or some other reason for the miss. If the cue ball is not drawing back as far as you'd like, you may learn that you could hit the cue ball a half tip lower and still not miscue. In short, your **awareness enables you to take valuable feedback, process it, and move towards the outcome you are seeking.**

TIP: Being mad blocks out the mistakes, replacing awareness with anger. Once you become aware of a problem, you are ready to do something

Increase Your Awareness When playing or practicing, keep your awareness at a high level. This should be the case no matter what the occasion or results from the most recent series of shots or games. **A high level of awareness will help you to confirm the things you are doing correctly.** Reinforcing the positive builds repetition and confidence. Awareness is also instrumental in turning poor shots into learning experiences. As you play, tune into things like:

- Visualizing a successful shot before you play it. The feel of your tip at contact. Your cueing (where you strike the cue ball).

- The feel of your stroke.
- The stillness of your body as you play the shot. The roll of a well-struck shot. The cue ball's route to the position zone. The speed of the table.
- How english takes off the rails. The sound of the ball hitting the pocket.

Awareness: the Secret to Improvement

When you are aware, you will feel things going on, right or wrong, with all parts of your shooting routine. Some things you will notice about your fundamentals include:

- Loose or tight?
- Slow or fast?
- Smooth or jerky?
- Straight or crooked?
- Balanced or off balance
- Stationary or airborne?
- Level or angled?

When you are aware of deficiencies in your stroke, you should then be ready to take steps to eliminate them from your game.

Without awareness, how can you change?

From Silence Comes Awareness

As your game improves, you will be doing more and more things correctly. These correct moves will largely be silent when you are stroking. For example, once you have perfected your shooting routine and you are in perfect alignment and balance, you will not feel these components any more when you are ready to stroke the shot. This will enable you to zero in on the feel of your stroke. In turn, your stroke will improve because you can really feel it now, as there is no interference from some other part of your body. In sum, **the more parts of the whole that are working correctly and together in unison, the more you will be able to focus on the most critical component of all: your stroke.**

Awareness is like focusing a camera's lens so you can see the picture of your game as clearly as possible. What clouds your lens are tension, indecision, frustration and a poor attitude. What fosters awareness are your love of the game, concentration, relaxation, a well-rehearsed routine, your desire to learn and improve your game, and an open mind.

TIP You can learn so much when you just stop and think about what it is that you are doing. Awareness is unbelievable power!!!