

7 Mental Skills for Better Play

By Paul Tornquist

You need the right **mental skills to be successful**, to be mentally tough and perform like the best. To **perform at your maximum potential**, whatever level you are, you need a strong mind. In the following key points, it shows that this is all about focus, visualization and relaxation.

All the top tennis players have certain mental skills in common. *What are they?*

1. **Playing one point at a time:** You need to be able to focus on what to do in the present moment. You have to be able to **let go of mistakes quickly** and **avoid worrying about what may happen** in the future. If you can do this you will **make less mental mistakes**, refocus before the next point and stay focused on your game plan and making corrections.
2. **Serving out matches:** In order to win matches this is very important. Mentally you need to **focus correctly** and overcome the fear of making mistakes. It is important to **play to win** and stick to your strategy. You have to be able to produce your best serves when you need them most. If you can do this you will be less frustrated, **more confident, win faster and more often**.
3. **Managing your personality and emotions:** As you know when you play tennis it is all about you. The **best players** are able to manage their personalities and **win the battle with themselves**. They are able to **use their emotions to help** and not hurt performance. You need to be able to manage your personality and the thoughts and emotions that come with this. Use certain techniques to return to a calm and composed mindset. Relaxation is the key to better play.
4. **Focusing on the process and not the outcome:** It is easy to get distracted by the score and the outcome of the match. You need to be able to **focus on the process of playing**. **This means keeping your attention “in the now”, do not worry about what is going to happen next**. If you can focus on what you need to do to play your best in this moment, you can improve even the smallest details and you will be **more confident**.
5. **Ignoring distractions and staying focused on the court:** There can be a lot of distractions when playing including your opponent, the umpire, your coach, parents and supporters as well as noises happening around the court. You need to be able to **block out everything that is not relevant** and **focus only on the important details**. This will help you **perform at your best**. You need to **focus only on the things in your control** which is just you, your play, your game plan, your confidence, etc.
6. **Performing under pressure:** As an individual sport it can be easy to feel the pressure as it is all up to you on the court. For example in the final rounds of a tournament, serving out the match, playing in front of important spectators or against a better opponent. You need to be able to **stay composed and calm** in

7 Mental Skills for Better Play

By Paul Tornquist

these situations. If you can **embrace the pressure**, you will **perform your best at the most important times** and have fun!

7. **Confidence:** You need to believe that you can perform your best in any situation. In order to greatly **improve your confidence**, you should **visualize your best shots** while playing a match and practising your game. If you are confident, you will be able to make your shots, **bounce back quickly from mistakes** and be aggressive when needed. When using visualization techniques during your game, you will see that your shots will significantly improve over time, which will give you the confidence that you need.

Paul Tornquist, Head Coach