

What have elephants got to do with golf?!

Think about this...you're playing a course for the first time – you hit your second on the par 5 and the ball flies straight and true into the distance – you walk over the hill to where you saw the ball fly and there it is sitting on the edge of the fairway with a perfect line into the green. What you now realise is that only a few yards from your ball lies a pond!

If your ball had gone in the pond it could have cost you dear, but you had aimed for the right edge of the fairway without giving a second thought to any possible danger!

So what is likely to happen next time you play that hole? What might you be thinking? Will it be aim for the right edge of the fairway or will it be ...whatever you do don't go near the pond? I would suggest that most of us might just be having a thought about "not going in the pond".

The challenge here is that the way our brain works means that we can't think about a negative concept without thinking about the concept first. So as you read this and I tell you not to think about pink elephants...I suspect that you have created a mental image of a pink elephant! Similarly when you say to yourself "Don't go in the pond" you create a mental image of your ball going into the pond – so you are now visualising and strengthening the image that you don't want!

The solution – focus on positives: "My line is the flag on the clubhouse" or "This will land on the left edge of the fairway in line with the 150 marker". The key is to use language that is both positive and specific. Cut out the negatives: "Don't go in the lake" or "Mustn't go in that bunker".

Like any golfing skill this takes practice, but practice regularly and watch your ball go where you want it to more often.

Good luck

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