



The Sounds of Science

Research shows that your playlist can help you listen your way to lower scores

Shakespeare described music as the “food of love.” Little did he know it could also fuel lower scores. New research by brain experts Hajime Fukui and Kumiko Toyoshima of Nara University in Japan indicates that listening to music floods your mind with feel-good sensations that not only make you happy but also ramp up your learning ability. According to Fukui and Toyoshima, hearing a song enhances the secretion of steroid hormones [cortisol, estrogen, testosterone, etc.]. These hormones help repair and regenerate the nerves in your brain, ultimately leading to cerebral plasticity. No, this isn’t your brain on Tupperware. Cerebral plasticity—a hot topic in brain research—is what allows you to learn new things and retain old memories, such as how your swing felt when you shot your best score

ever, or that wrist-release move that had you bombing it past your buddies last summer. Better yet, the nerve repair and regeneration that occurs when you listen to music connects the sound to what you’re doing. You can literally “fine-tune” your swing by creating a mental bridge between your favorite song and your A-game.

It’s far-out science, but everyone has experienced a rush of multi-sensory images—call it nostalgia—upon hearing an oldie but goodie. The good vibrations brought on by the right tune is just what you need to summon your best swing—if you go about it correctly. Simply listening to your iPod while you hit balls will only interrupt your feedback system by blocking the sound of the shot. Here’s the correct method

to get the most of your swing-repair jukebox. You’ll need

your music player, headphones and a bucket of balls.

Step 1 On a day when you’re feeling your A-swing, hit ten warm-up shots with the music off.

Step 2 Turn on the music. The smoother the tunes, the better. [Maybe it’s the old golf pro in me, but I favor the Eagles and the Byrds. See playlist, below.]

Step 3 Cut the sound and hit 10 more shots, listening intently to the sound of your “good” impact.

Step 4 Put the music back on and hit 10 more balls.

Step 5 Continue this on/off routine until the bucket is empty. You’ll soon hear the music in your head even when it isn’t playing, and this will connect the melody to your good impact. It’ll take about three one-hour sessions to make it stick. Once it does, hit “play” anytime on your mental playlist to re-create the link and call up your best swing. You’ll be the one hearing music, but your opponents will be the ones singing the blues.



YOUR GAME-IMPROVEMENT PLAYLIST

- 1. Choose a song without lyrics—instrumental music works best.**
- 2. Make sure you don’t have emotional ties to the music. Your prom theme? Forget it.**
- 3. No fast tempos. Make it more “chill” than “Chili Peppers.”**
- 4. Choose something you won’t get sick of.**
- 5. Consider classical music: Vivaldi, Handel, Bach or Mozart. Songs by great composers exude an overall energy and symmetry that’s mostly absent in pop music.**





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