

# The "Report Card" Game for Short Putting Skill

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Geoff Mangum's PuttingZone™ Instruction

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[ZipTip: PRACTICE: The "Report Card" Game for Short Putting Skill](#)

Try the Report Card Game to sharpen up short-putting skills under pressure with readily understandable feedback in a reasonably short, well-defined exercise.

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Many people have heard about Tour players practicing short putts by sinking 25 in a row at 3 feet, then 25 in a row from 4 feet, etc., out to say 8 feet -- and having to start all over again at the beginning upon ANY miss, even the 25th putt at 8 feet after making 149 putts in a row! Forget that! While one might applaud the level of commitment and seriousness in such a practice routine, hardly anyone OTHER than a pro has the time for it. Here's a nice putting game I created to focus on short-putt skills called the "report card" game because it tests your putting skills over a critical range of distances and assigns a "grade" of up to 100 points. The basic format requires a minimum of 14 putts between 2 and 8 feet, and is always completed in no more than 40 putts, so it usually lasts between 10 and 30 minutes. There are five formats for different levels of challenge. The "report card" game is similar to the pro drill, in that it covers the same "close" distances and involves considerable pressure to make putts in a row, but it has a definite ending in a reasonable time, is more of a "game" for fun, and has a readily understandable "score."

## [How to Play -- Basic "Q School" Format.](#)

The game requires putts from distances out from the hole of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 feet. On the practice green, find a quiet hole and set a line of seven tee pegs out from the hole at 1-foot intervals from 2 feet to 8 feet. At 2 feet, the player putts for a maximum of 10 points. The maximum points are gained by sinking two 5-point putts in a row and gaining 5 points for each sink, or if there is a miss, switching to trying to sink two putts in-a-row on an all-or-nothing basis for 5 recovery points. At all stations past 2 feet, the player has the opportunity to make a maximum of 15 points. (This way, all station maximums add to 100 points for the game.) This time the first series has three 5-point putts in-a-row, and the recovery of 5 points requires sinking three in-a-row on an all-or-nothing basis.

In the first series of 5-point putts, the player accumulates points as long as he or she continues to sink putts in a row. (This series is NOT all-or-nothing.) A miss of any 5-point putt automatically switches the player to the recovery series for 5 points. The player completes all available putts and then advances to the next station. Here's the scheme:

Distance	First series (in-a-row)	Recovery (in-a-row+all-or-nothing)	Points
2 feet	0-2 putts (5 pts each sink)	2 in-a-row+all-or-nothing (5 pts)	0-10 pts
3 feet	0-3 putts (5 pts each sink)	3 in-a-row+all-or-nothing (5 pts)	0-15
4 feet	0-3 putts (5 pts each sink)	3 in-a-row+all-or-nothing (5 pts)	0-15
5 feet	0-3 putts (5 pts each sink)	3 in-a-row+all-or-nothing (5 pts)	0-15
6 feet	0-3 putts (5 pts each sink)	3 in-a-row+all-or-nothing (5 pts)	0-15
7 feet	0-3 putts (5 pts each sink)	3 in-a-row+all-or-nothing (5 pts)	0-15
8 feet	0-3 putts (5 pts each sink)	3 in-a-row+all-or-nothing (5 pts)	0-15
Totals	20 putts OR 14-40 putts		0-100 pts

The easiest way to score 100 points is to sink two at 2 feet, and then three in-a-row at each station thereafter out to 8 feet. That's 20 putts for 5 points each. The hard way to score 100 points is to make all but the last of the 5-pointers and then make each recovery series of in-a-row putts / all-or-nothing putts at each station. That's 40 putts, with 65 points coming from 20 five-pointers (7 misses) and 35 points coming from 20 recovery putts. Of course, it's possible to score zero or any other score up to 100, with between 14 and 40 total putts. It helps to think of letter grades on the "report card" like A:90-100, B:80-89, C:70-79; D:60-69; F:under 60. You don't get your Tour card without an A.

### [Variant Levels -- Prep Team, College Team, Q School, Tour Pro, Ryder Cup.](#)

The level of difficulty for the game is easily modified. Here are two levels below and two levels beyond the basic "Q School" format. The variants modify the range and the first and recovery series.

**Prep School Golf Team.** For the "prep school golf team" level, reduce the stations to five (at 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 feet) with two 10-pointers in a row (not all-or-nothing) and any miss switching the player to the recovery putts consisting of four separate tries for 5 points each (not in-a-row, and not all-or-nothing). In the first series, any sink gains 10 points, and this 10 points is retained even if the next putt in the series is missed. The recovery putts are continued regardless of a miss or until the maximum of 20 points is attained. It's entirely possible to fully recover, regardless of the first series. Possible station scores are 0, 5, 10, 15, or 20 points. This level requires only between 10 and 30 putts to complete, and it's not too difficult to get close to a passing grade before you reach the toughest putts at the longer ranges -- but you still get quite a challenge to excel.

**College Golf Team.** The "college team" level uses the same five stations, but requires a first series of two in-a-row putts / all-or-nothing putts for 20 points, and if there is a miss, then up to four in-a-row putts for 5 points each (not all-or-nothing) for possible recovery of up to 20 points. The recovery putts stop if there is a miss. If the maximum of 20 points is attained, no further putts are taken. Again, full recovery is possible. Possible station scores are 0, 5, 10, 15, or 20 points. The level takes between 10 and 30 putts.

**Q School.** The "Q School" level uses the basic format described above, with seven stations requiring between 14 and 40 putts. Possible station scores are 0, 5, or 10 points at 2 feet, and 0, 5, 10, or 15 points at 3-8 feet.

**Tour Pro.** The "Tour Pro" level expands the range to ten stations (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 feet) in an "all-or-nothing" system as follows: at each station, three in-a-row putts for 10 points for the station (and no points if any of the three is missed) or recovery putts of two in-a-row for a total recovery of 5 points for the station (and no recovery points if either is missed). Possible station scores are 0, 5, or 10 points. This level takes between 10 and 50 putts.

**Ryder Cup.** The "Ryder Cup" level uses these ten stations (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 feet) and requires five putts in-a-row at each station on an all-or-nothing basis for 10 points each station. There are NO recovery points available. Possible station scores are 0 or 10 points. The game takes between 10 and 50 GRUELING GRINDING putts!

### Why Play.

This game addresses a critical range in putting. Most golfers are able to sink 95% or better of 2-foot putts, but only 50% or less a mere four feet later at the 6-foot range, and the make-percentage declines even further out to the 8-foot range to about 30%. That's a drop-off of nearly two-thirds of all putting skill over six short feet. Outside this range, the decline continues, but at a much more moderate rate.

The basic "Q School" format places a healthy premium on making a steady progression of putts all in a row from increasing lengths, and misses of these 5-pointers is penalized heaviest the earlier in the series the player misses. In a series of three 5-pointers, a miss of the first one leaves only a possible 5 points total for that station rather than 15; a miss of the second one leaves only a maximum of 10 points for that station. The opportunity for full recovery after a miss to attain the maximum points for the station comes only when the last available 5-pointer is missed, and then the player has to sink three in-a-row on an all-or-nothing basis to recover fully from the miss.

By advancing through this series of distances, the player soon discovers his or her "sure-thing" range and has a practice mechanism to extend it outward, perhaps several feet. And the game also teaches the level of caution and exactitude needed to make putts in the 4- to 8-foot range. Another benefit is it teaches how the concentration tends to wander, and what sort of focus and concentration is required and works best to keep a string of sinks going.

The "Prep School" level is fairly forgiving, but the golfer soon learns not to allow any "let down" attitude from failing to make two in-a-row defuse concentration on the two "recovery" putts. Neither of the series is all-or-nothing. The "College Team" level places greater emphasis on making putts in-a-row on an all-or-nothing basis, and penalizes a miss in the first series by requiring the player to make up the lost 20 points with four in-a-row putts for 5 points each. The "Tour Pro" level extends the range and awards points in the first series only for three in-a-row / all-or-nothing putts. Recovery of a maximum of 5 points after a miss of the first series requires two in-a-row / all-or-nothing putts. The "Ryder Cup" level takes the gloves off and flatly requires five in-a-row / all-or-nothing putts at each station for any points -- no second chances, no slacking off, no excuses.

Don't be surprised if you start out scoring in the 30s or 40s your first couple of tries. This game is TOUGH! But if you persist, you should find scores in the 70s and 80s come soon enough, although the "A" report card of 90+ points will remain an extremely elusive challenge.

**A Score Keeping Tip.** For the formats where both the first series and recovery series are all-or-nothing (Tour Pro and Ryder Cup), if you make the required putts in a row for the points, pick up the tee peg and put it in your pocket before moving out to the next station. Each peg is worth 10 points. For the mixed scoring formats (Prep, College and Q School), just keep in mind your running totals (by 5s and 10s) as you progress through the stations.

If you want to keep a RECORD of your putting progress (or lack thereof), you might try 3x5 index cards with columns across the top for putts and the rows down the side for the

stations. The Q School card would have columns marked 5-5-5 / X-X-X and rows listed down the side for 2 through 8 feet. Then check off the putts you make and date the card.

The scoring columns for each game might take this form, with "-" meaning "in-a-row", "X" meaning the putt is one in an "all-or-nothing" series, and putts after "/" are available only when the maximum points for the station are not already attained (i.e., a miss in the first series). A string of point values without "-" between them is for a series of separate tries.

Level	Stations	Max. Pts./Station		Format at each Station		#Putts Min.-Max
		Stations=	Total /Game	First Series	Recovery	
Prep Team:	5 (2-6')	5 x 20 pts =	100 pts	10-10 (20) /	5 5 5 5 (20)	10 - 30
Coll. Team:	5 (2-6')	5 x 20 pts =	100 pts	X-X (20) /	5-5-5-5 (20)	10 - 30
Q School:	1 (2')	1 x 10 pts =	10 pts	5-5 (10) /	X-X (5)	14 - 40
" "	+6 (3-8')	+6 x 15 pts =	90 pts	5-5-5 (15) /	X-X-X (5)	
Tour Pro:	10 (2-11')	10 x 10 pts =	100 pts	X-X-X (10) /	X-X (5)	10 - 50
Ryder Cup:	10 (2-11')	10 x 10 pts =	100 pts	X-X-X-X-X (10)	None	10 - 50

### [Make This Part of Your Game.](#)

This is a good game for idle putting practice or even for a pre-game warmup session. If you want to try three or four tests in a row, you'll probably need about one hour. The game readily lends itself to solo or competitive practice, and can be played indoors at any time of day or season of the year. It's quick enough that you can strive for improvement over a handful of games in a single session. If you can get your "report card" up to the "B" level or better on a consistent basis, it will surely translate into greater confidence on the course and lower scores for the real game. Conquer this critical range and make yourself proud of your short putting skills!

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