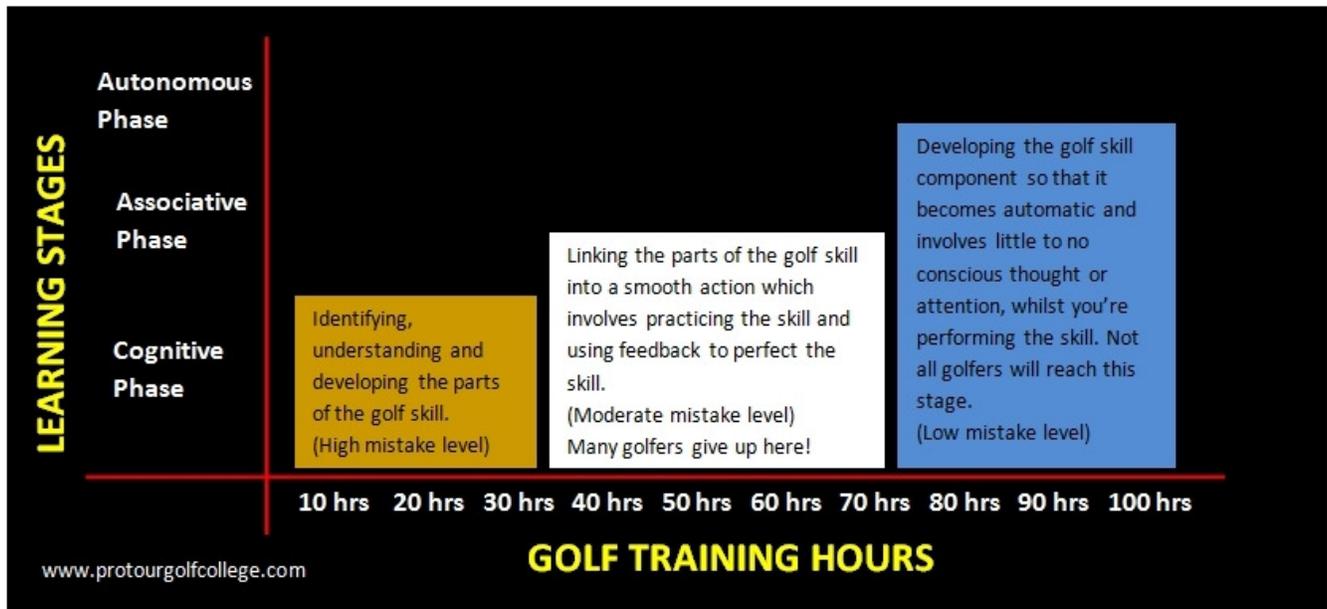


# THREE STAGES OF LEARNING GOLF HABITS

Learning a new habit or changing an existing one is a process and like any process there is an input end and an output end. When you begin to change there are 3 habit learning stages all golfers will go through in learning a new habit and these stages are defined as;

1. **Cognitive Stage / Conscious Incompetence** (High thinking - low capability)
2. **Associative Stage / Conscious Competence** (Moderate thinking - increased capability)
3. **Autonomous Stage / Unconscious Competence** (Low thinking - high capability)



## 1. The Cognitive Stage (The know that you don't know how to stage)

The cognitive stage is the concept stage of learning golf skills where a golfer gains an understanding of how to perform a golf skill set correctly. It is what we call the 'mental map' stage which is the stage of laying the mental blueprint out in front of you and learning why and how you do it a particular way.

This stage is marked by high mistakes because you're highly aware of how you are moving your body and the golf club. This is a critical time in learning a habit as you need to make sure that the information that you are learning and applying is correct and useful to you.

Learning the skill is easier at this stage with your golf coach/instructor through videos of your golf skill plus drill that help you to understand and bridge the gap between the concept of how the skill is performed and actually performing it.

## 2. The Associative Stage (The know that you know how to stage)

The associative stage which is also known as the conscious competence stage is the practicing and refinement stage of learning golf skills where a golfer is gaining an understanding of how to perform the skills correctly by repeating the action over and over thereby developing a synchronous flow between mind and muscle.

At this stage in your habit building you are still prone to make mistakes however this is occurring less. This stage is what we call the 'feel map' stage because you're developing feel in your skill that you can recognise which helps the process of repeating.

Another important aspect of this stage in the habit building cycle is that your confidence levels are increasing because the results of your practice are becoming more consistent and predictable which has a confidence flow-on effect.

### 3. The Autonomous Stage (The forget that you know how to stage)

The autonomous stage also known as the unconscious competence stage is the stage of executing your golf skill automatically. However as simple as this sounds; it is not very common for golfers to reach this milestone in habit formation as golfers are notorious tinkerers which tends to keep them between the associative and autonomous stages in their habit formation.

Those that do reach autonomous level display effortless and efficient motion that repeats consistently. Consider that you have many of your simple daily habits that have reached this lofty status where you no longer have to focus on how anymore.

You have to keep practicing your skills at this stage however your strategy will be more on about performance on the golf course and less about skill perfection. Practice will be focused more on developing skills under pressure which can only really work once you move from the associative phase of habit building.

