

## CHAPTER 8

# Keep It Simple.

**3** things you'll gain from this Chapter

1. Understand why Keeping It Simple matters
2. How to create a simple "Go-To-Plan"
3. Confidence in your game Basics



### Overthinking.

It's difficult to keep things simple, particularly in the moments that matter. With the best of intentions, we overthink by trying to control all that's happening. Add to that the advice from well-meaning teammates or observers, and things become so complicated we forget the Basics that matter!

Imagine that a team needs eight runs to win at the start of the last over of a 20/20 final. The mindful player is composed, weighs up the best scoring options and then settles with relaxed aggression, waiting on the bowler. With timing and placement, they easily pick off the runs in twos.

What a contrast to the player who, thinking they must hit a boundary, swings hard at the first ball, lifts their eyes too early, and drags the ball waist-high to mid-wicket, leaving a new batsman with an even tougher challenge.

### The Power of Simplicity.

The *Mindful Cricket* book features the story of an English County player who had success in the T20 Leagues but was struggling with his game. His Journal highlights what happens to a player's mind when things get too complicated:

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*My mind is jumbled and racing out on the ground. I'm thinking about so many things it's impossible to be calm and focused. I'm worrying about bowling to batsmen with big powerful bats on tiny grounds. The noisy crowds and comments from the opposition are bothering me more than normal. I'm also feeling the pressure of a one-year contract. Instead of bowling four tight overs, I'm reacting too much, and the past two innings I've had to go for it from the first ball and holed out both times with pretty ordinary shots.*  
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## **The Secret to Simplicity - Go-To-Plans.**

One of the best ways to develop a mindset of simplicity is to create Go-To-Plans, which is a simple tool built on three Mindful Practices:

1. Back to Basics
2. Play to Your Strengths
3. Apply Pressure to opponents.

Go-To-Plans take your mind off things you can't control (like pitch conditions), and instead focus in the moment on what you can do something about.

Commitment to Basics and playing to your strengths makes it simpler, which increases the chances of success by playing the percentages; while the focus on Applying Pressure gets you out of your own head.

Let's develop plans for batting and bowling practice, so you can understand the foundation thinking and action behind this very valuable tool. You'll then be ready to take the approach into matches.

## ACTIVITY: Create a “Library” for Your Go-To-Plan.

You can use Go-To-Plans in lots of different situations (eg start of innings, when struggling, final overs of a match, etc). It’s useful to have thought through some options, because in those moments the plan needs to be super simple.

### TOOL 1: Back to Basics.

Consider the Basics to fall back on when batting, bowling and fielding/keeping.

Draft a “library list” of important Basics for your game in each activity:

Bowling	Batting	Fielding/Keeping
Example: <i>Stick to line and length</i>	Example: <i>Use 1-2-3 Reset</i>	Example: <i>Watch ball into hands</i>

Add to your Go-To-Plan library as you complete other Mindful Cricket activities.

### TOOL 2: Play to Your Strengths.

The second part of a Go-To-Plan is to capitalise on strengths, because in any match situation the ideal thing to do is to leverage your strengths.

Here’s an example of a My Strengths Toolsheet for batting and bowling for the County Player:

<b>My Strengths Toolsheet</b>	
<b>What I Bring to Bowling</b>	<b>What I Bring to Batting</b>
Spin both ways Can read a batsman Accurate Experience and success in different conditions Subtle variation of pace	Sound defence Enough power to hit over the ring Range of shots Experience and success in different conditions Quick between wickets

When the mind gets complicated, it is easy to lose sight of strengths and become overwhelmed by the challenges and weaknesses. That’s why being mindful is so helpful - a couple of breaths, a reminder of strengths, and soon things look so much better.

Create your own My Strengths list (get assistance from your coaches):

<b>My Strengths Toolsheet</b>		
<b>Bowling</b>	<b>Batting</b>	<b>Fielding/Keeping</b>
Example: <i>Subtle variations</i>	Example: <i>Good defence</i>	Example: <i>Taking sharp catches</i>

### TOOL 3: Apply Pressure.

The third foundation in a Go-To-Plan is Applying Pressure to opponents. This has the double benefit of getting you out of your own head, and also doing things which can shift momentum.

The whole Section on Play Clever will provide ideas and practical content; however, take a few moments now to reflect on some of the ways you can apply pressure to opponents.

List ideas on how to Apply Pressure to your opponents:

<b>Apply Pressure Toolsheet</b>		
<b>Bowling</b>	<b>Batting</b>	<b>Fielding/Keeping</b>
Example: <i>Restrict scoring</i>	Example: <i>Quick singles</i>	Example: <i>Cut off boundaries</i>



**Practice Tip:** The power of a Go-To-Plan lies less in the content of the plan, and more in the confidence and focus that come from having one to fall back on when things are tight.

With your library taking shape, a good next step is to create Go-To-Plans for batting and bowling practice to get familiar with this approach.

## ACTIVITY: Creating a Batting Practice Go-To-Plan.

A Go-To-Plan should be brief, and built on three components: Back to Basics, Play to Your Strengths, and Apply Pressure to opponents. Keep It Simple and build your focus and confidence, so less is better. I recommend putting it onto a card so you have a quick reference point during the practice session.

Also give thought before batting practice to a “game scenario” you might work on, such as starting an innings, or chasing down a score. This will help to simulate the thought processes.

### Go-To-Plan for Batting Practice

What Basics are important? *(eg early into position, short backlift, head still and watch the ball)*

What strengths can you bring? *(eg solid defence, quick to judge length)*

How do you Apply Pressure to bowlers? *(eg start with positive body language, clip anything on leg)*

## ACTIVITY: Creating a Bowling Practice Go-To-Plan.

Create your bowling plan using the same process as for batting. For example, you might want to work on your “death” bowling in a short form game.

### Go-To-Plan for Bowling Practice

What Basics are important? *(eg bowl to one part of the field, maintain rhythm)*

What strengths can you bring? *(eg slower ball, accuracy)*

How do you Apply Pressure? *(eg first two deliveries yorkers outside off, follow a blocked run with slower ball because batter is likely frustrated)*



**Practice Tip:** Use exactly the same approach for developing and using Go-To-Plans in matches. With experience you’ll be able to create these on the run, by drawing from your “library” and match awareness.

## Chapter Takeaways.

Mindful Cricketers don't try to control everything. They do take time to set and hone their Go-To-Plans, which means that when it's not working or confidence starts to waver, there is something tried and tested to fall back on.

Jot down your insights from this Chapter:

## Quotes from the *Mindful Cricket* book:

*“Simple” begins with a mindset of focusing on the Basics, Playing to Your Strengths and Applying Pressure.*

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*Mindful Cricket is attending to what you can control, and guiding your mind away from the uncontrollable.*

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*Apply Pressure to your opponents through projecting confidence in your body language, and using your strengths and the Basics.*

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*The Go-To-Plan is a simple approach seen in the mindset and behaviours of cricketers who own their space and hold their shape when others are losing theirs.*

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