

## Importance of Visualization and Imagery Techniques in Sports

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### Abstract

Visualization is also known as mental imagery and rehearsal technique. Visualization is used primarily as a training tool, one that improves the quality of athletic movement, increases the power of concentration, and serves to reduce the pressures of competition on the athlete while building athletic confidence. Many elite athletes routinely use visualization techniques as part of training and competition. There are many stories of athletes who have used these techniques to cultivate a competitive edge. As a multi-sensory experience, however, the technique involves much more than just visualization. It is always a challenging situation for a sports person to face national and international competitions. It's because the result in the field is unpredictable. It is common not to be successful, irrespective of practice sessions, having great coaches supervision, successful players suggestions, having great belief in self to perform well. In addition to training the body, a sports person needs mental training to perform well in the field. The brain, the top portion of the body where training is deposited, energies are channelized should be trained to excel along with the body it is housed. Slowly the coaches, players started realizing the role of counseling for players in enhancing the performance not only after the injury to recover but also in regular sports performances.

**Keyword:** mental imagery, Visualization, performance.

What Is Mental Imagery?

Mental imagery is a multi-sensory process that draws on the senses to create a vivid mental image of a particular process. Imagery is essentially the process of creating and recreating an experience in the mind's eye, which means it can be practiced at just about any time, anywhere.

### Introduction:

Imagery has been described as "the use of all of the senses to re-create or create an experience within the mind." Imagery has both a cognitive and motivational characteristic. The cognitive feature of images is the use of mental imagery to experience sports activities competencies and to devise techniques earlier for competitions.

### How Imagery Enhances Sports Performance:

Imagery, or visualization, has also been referred to as mental rehearsal or guided meditation. No matter the term, the basic techniques and concepts are the same. Generally speaking, visualization is the process of creating a mental image or intention of what you want to happen or feel in reality.

Sports psychology researchers have been studying the impact of imagery on sports performance for decades. A paper published in 2017 explains that all people, regardless of their age, sex,

or athletic ability, can use imagery to enhance performance at the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional levels.

The authors also note that sport psychology research rarely focuses exclusively on goal-based images, but instead, the *process* of achieving a goal. "This is likely because goal- or outcome-based images (e.g., qualifying for a competition, winning a medal) are least often used by athletes," the study authors explain.

### Visualizing Success:

By imagining the full picture of a scene, complete with images of a previous best performance, a future desired outcome, and the experience of performing each move, the athlete is able to fully embody that feeling. While imagining these scenarios, the athlete should try to imagine the detail and the way it feels to perform in the desired way.

**Repetition :** Using the mind, an athlete can call up these images repeatedly, enhancing the skill through repetition or rehearsal, similar to physical practice. With mental

rehearsal, minds and bodies become trained actually to perform the skills and performances imagined. Research has shown that athletes can improve both physical and psychological reactions in certain situations with visualization.<sup>2</sup> Such repeated imagery can build both experience and confidence in an athlete's ability to perform certain skills under pressure or in various possible scenarios.

### **Why Attitude Is Important in Sports:**

If you're an athlete or enjoy competitive sports, developing a positive mental attitude can help give you an edge. Emotions, both happy and sad, can affect cognitive functioning (how well you think) along with your energy level and other aspects of your physical performance.

### **Use Positive Self-Talk:**

Positive self-talk can take many different forms. For some people, reciting a mantra—a specific phrase or sentence, or even a single word—is an effective way to manage thoughts and quash the negativity that can get in the way of optimal performance. Your mantra can be anything that inspires you, such as:

- Power
- Focus
- I can do it
- I'm ready for this

Research shows that positive self-talk helps reduce anxiety and increases self-confidence, self-optimization, self-efficacy, and performance.<sup>1</sup> Consistently practicing positive self-talk for the long-term is more effective than short-term training, so making this practice a regular part of your routine is essential.

- Mental imagery rehearsal is simply a mental technique that programs the mind and body to respond optimally.
- By using mental imagery rehearsal as a mental training tool, athletes have the capacity to see and believe, which gives them the confidence and focus to perform successfully.
- Many athletes use imagery, but they do not use it systematically and often are unable to control their images.
- Mental imagery involves the athletes' imagery themselves in a specific environment or performing a specific activity.

- Mental imagery rehearsal to take their game to the next level.
- Different uses of imagery in sport include: mental practice of specific performance skills, improving confidence, and positive thinking, problem solving, controlling arousal and anxiety.
- And analysis, preparation for performance and during imagery.
- Sport psychologists have attempted to understand the exact mechanism that causes mental imagery to work.
- Numerous theories exist to support that mental imagery rehearsal is a veritable tool in enhancing sport performance.

### **Suggestions:**

Without giving the psychological training a tough, mental picture of best performance to happen in the competition and taking the challenge in the competitions, one can't say the training of an athlete or a player is finished. Apart from the training on skill, technique and physical fitness the mental toughness and visualization of the best version of a player is a must for the players. It is proven many times by international athletes, Olympic medalist Michel phelphs, tennis player roger federer, tiger woods etc., practicing visualization is the key in their success. This paper deals with one of the most effective methods i.e., imagery and visualization, how they help the players to give the peak performance in the competitions.

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