

Mental Training

Competition can be lots of fun. It gives you a chance to meet new people and to test your skills against other athletes. Sometimes competition can also be a little scary. You want to perform really well but sometimes you may think or feel in ways that make you feel nervous, worried or scared.

How do you feel before competition?

Happy
Excited
Relaxed
Sad

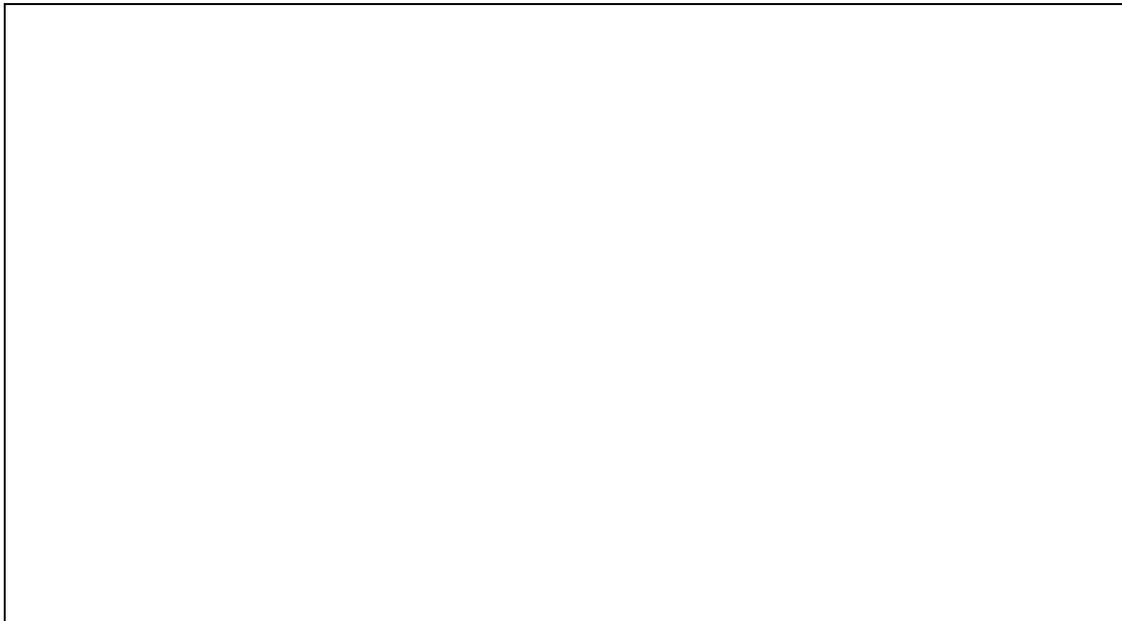
Sick
Scared
Nervous

How would you like to feel before competition?

Happy
Confident
Excited

Ready
Relaxed

Draw or include a photo of yourself in competition that shows you looking positive and ready.



Look at this picture everyday to remind yourself of how you want to feel.

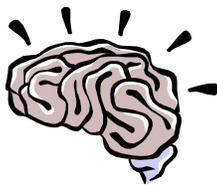
An Athlete Dream

It all starts with a DREAM. What would you like to do if you could do anything you wanted in your sport? What would you look like? Where would you be? Who would be around you? Dream big and imagine yourself as the best athlete you could possibly be.

Draw a picture of that person, and describe that person and what you see.

DREAM GOALS give you energy and make you feel good about yourself. They allow you to see what could be possible.

Hard work is a big part of making your DREAMS come true. As an athlete it is important to know areas that will help you improve and allow you to move toward your dream. Here are three important areas to work on in this diary:

	Nutrition	Eating good foods that make your body and mind feel healthy and ready to perform
	Mental Skills	Thinking positive thoughts, feelings and images about yourself and your performance
	Sport Specific	Making good choices everyday, like following your training program, getting 8 hours of sleep per night. Practicing the skills you need to work on to be a better performer in your sport.

It is important to know where you want to go and then you can decide how you are going to get there. You already have a number of **STRENGTHS** as an athlete. Your first step is to list your **STRENGTHS**. What are some **POSITIVE** things that you already do in each of these areas? If you are not sure what you are good at, ask your coach to help you.

The next step is to list the things that you can do better. What are some things that you could do to help you become a better athlete in your sport? Write them below. Remember to talk to your coach for more ideas.

		Things I do well	Things I could do better
	Nutrition		
	Mental Skills		
	Sport Specific		

It is important to work at getting better in each of these areas. If you do that, you will **FEEL STRONGER** and healthier, have more fun and perform better.

Now pick one thing from each area that you would really like to work on over the next few months. Maybe you need to improve your level of fitness or flexibility. Maybe you would like to work on a particular skill. These things then become your goals. List your three goals below.

My three goals are

1. Nutrition _____
2. Mental Skills _____
3. Sport Specific _____

Using Your Mental Gifts

You can learn to make yourself feel better before you perform by using your mental GIFTS to help you focus and feel happy and ready for competition. If you practice using your gifts everyday, they will give back to you.

G is for Goals

Every day you should set a goal. GOALS give you something to work toward. They can also help you feel good about yourself when you reach them.

You have already set a mental, sport specific and nutrition goal. The next steps are to be specific with your GOALS and identify actions that you can do everyday to help you achieve your GOALS. Use the example below to help you and ask your coach for feedback.

Example: Gymnastics

My goal is: To improve flexibility
I will do the following things to work on my goal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- test flexibility each week- decide on the amount of improvement I would like to see- stretch every day- warm up and cool down before practice and competitions- ask my coach for ways to stretch

Use the goal boxes to help you set your goals.

My mental goal:
I will do the following to work on my goal:

My nutrition goal:

I will do the following to work on my goal:

My sport specific goal:

I will do the following to work on my goal:

**Use your actions as little goals that you can work on each day, week and month.
Remember to work on a goal everyday.**

I is for Imagery

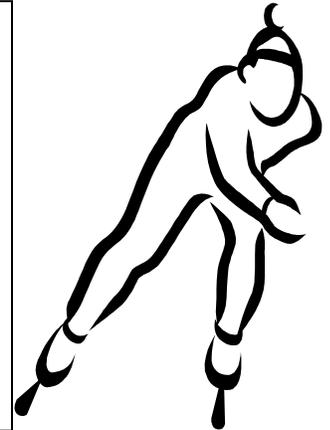
The pictures you have in your mind can help you learn new skills and prepare for competition. They can also help you feel **HAPPY** and **STRONG** and help you **BELIEVE** in yourself.

When you see yourself performing well in your head, you are teaching your mind and body what you would like to happen. You are creating a **POSITIVE** movie of yourself that you can watch anytime.

Question – What does your movie look like?

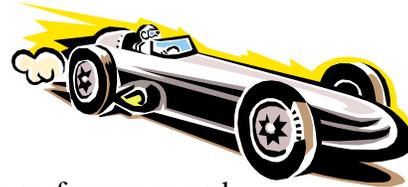
Try closing your eyes and imagining yourself performing in your sport. Try and see yourself having fun and **PERFORMING REALLY** well. See your coaches and **TEAMMATES CHEERING** you on and focus on how good it feels.

Below, describe what you see in your picture.

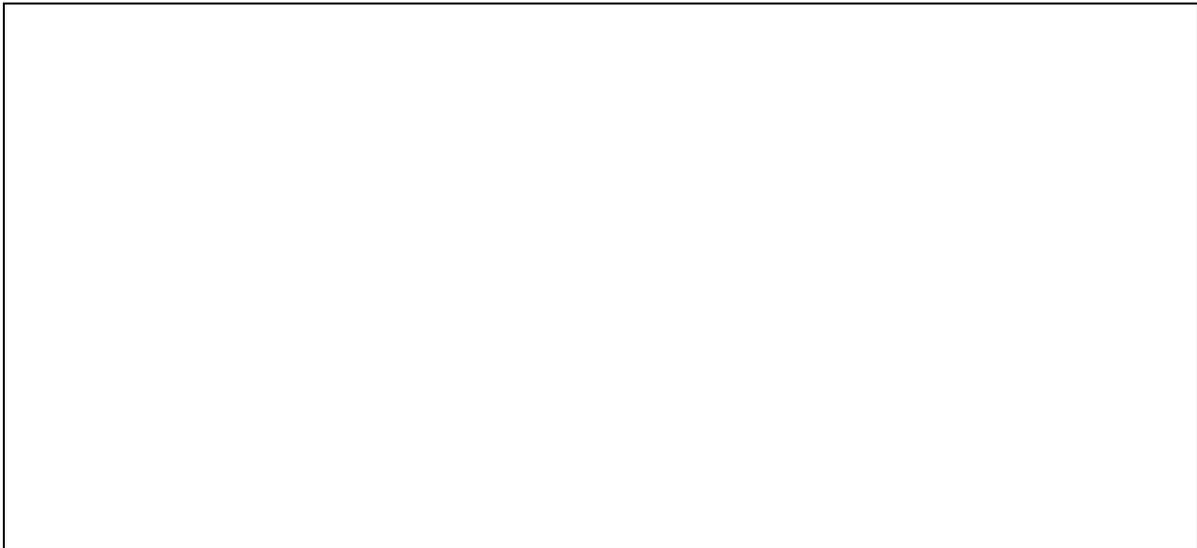


Everyday, watch your movie and feel all the good feelings that go along with seeing yourself performing well.

Sometimes you can also think about other pictures that make you feel **STRONG** or **FAST** or **HAPPY** about yourself. You can imagine objects, animals or other people that make you feel good.



Think of a picture that helps you feel good about your performance and include that picture below:

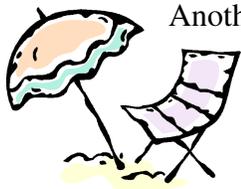


Look at the picture or see it in your mind whenever you want to feel good about yourself and your performance.

F is for Feelings

Feelings are great and sport can make you feel lots of good feelings. You can feel happy and excited about competition. You can feel good being around all your teammates and coaches. Sometimes you might feel a little too nervous or get scared. This is okay too. You just need to learn what to do to help those feelings go away or turn them into GOOD FEELINGS.

One thing you can do, if you do not feel good, is think of your favourite song. You can sing it to yourself or you can listen to it if you have the tape or CD or iPod. What songs make you feel happy or ready for competition?



Another thing you can do is think of your favourite place to go. Maybe you like going for walks in the park or going to the beach. Sometimes when you get too nervous or scared it can be helpful to think of your favourite place to help you feel good again. Where is your favourite place to go? Try and see it in your mind and imagine yourself there having fun and feeling nice and relaxed.



One more thing you can do to try and control your feelings is to practice relaxing your body through breathing. All you have to do is focus on your breathing and listen to your breath. Here is a little exercise you can try by yourself or have your coach do it with you.

- Stand comfortably with your hands down by your side
- Breathe in and out slowly
- Now take a big deep breath and as you breathe in, count to four
- Now very slowly let your breath out as you count to eight
- Try this 3 times in a row.
- Now return to your regular breathing.

Practice one of these things each day and then at competition, you can feel all the good feelings by using one of these strategies.

T is for Thoughts

THOUGHTS can really help you perform better and have fun. When you say good things to yourself, you feel good. Here are a few examples of POSITIVE and helpful thoughts.

- I can do it.
- I am a good athlete
- I am strong
- I am fast
- I like my sport

What kind of good thoughts do you have when you are performing?

Sometimes, however, you may say things to yourself that do not make you feel very good. Here are a few examples of negative or unhelpful thoughts:

- I can't do it
- I suck
- I hate this

What kind of negative thoughts do you have sometimes when you are performing?

When you say things that do not make you feel good, it is important to stop the thoughts and start saying nicer more helpful things to yourself. When you say something not helpful, just say the word "STOP" or imagine a big stop sign.

Then, say three helpful or POSITIVE things to yourself to make you feel good again.

Pick three things you can say to yourself everyday that will make you feel good.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

S is for Support

It is important to support your thoughts, feelings, images, and goals. You should have a plan that you follow during competition that helps you feel good about yourself and keeps you focused on your performance. Try making up a plan to follow. Ask your coach if you need some help.

Athlete Focus Plan

Take a moment and write out your plan.

During competitions, I will:

1. Relax by _____
(e.g. taking a deep breath, shaking my muscles)

2. Say something positive to myself like: _____
(e.g. I can do this, I am strong)

3. Imagine something positive like: _____
(e.g., my best performance, a powerful animal)

4. Focus on the next thing like: _____
(e.g., key word to help me start, feel strong, focus on the ball)

Sometimes other people can support you too, like your coach or teammates. They need to know the things you like to hear so they can say the right things to help you.

What things do you like your coach to say to you before you compete?

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

What things do you like your teammates to say to you before you compete?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Pre-competition Routine

A lot of athletes follow some kind of routine before competition to help them feel ready. What do you like to do to get ready for competition?

Here are a few things to consider in your plan:

- Equipment/clothing check
- Positive thought check
- Positive feeling check
- Meals
- Physical warm up
- Positive focus check
- Positive image check

Here is a sample preparation routine

<i>Things I do to get ready to perform...</i>	
<p>First thing I think about when I wake up: Wake up and imagine myself having a good performance before I get out of bed.</p> <p>Things I like to eat before performing: Breakfast – cereal, milk, banana, orange juice.</p> <p>Things I need to pack in my bag: Clothes, equipment, snacks.</p> <p>How I like to feel before I leave: Relaxed and ready</p> <p>Time that I like to arrive at the competition: Arrive an hour before start.</p>	<p>Things I do to get ready physically and mentally: Go for a light jog. Start thinking about what I want to do today – positive images.</p> <p>Stretching and relaxing, and chatting with teammates.</p> <p>Warm up with team – focus on easy skills first, use key words.</p> <p>Listen to the coach and go over plan.</p> <p>Things I do/say right before competition: Say positive things to myself right before I start. “I can do this. I am strong and fast.”</p> <p>Follow my focus plan.</p>
<i>Competition/Game begins!</i>	

Having a routine is a good way to prepare. Use the section below to help you decide what your plan should be. Ask your coach for more ideas.

Things I do to get ready to play or perform....	
<p>Things I think about when I wake up:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Things I like to eat before performing:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Things I need to pack in my bag:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Things I do to get ready physically and mentally:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>9. _____</p> <p>10. _____</p>

<p>How I like to feel before I leave:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Things I do/say right before competition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____
<p style="text-align: center;">Competition/Game Begins!!!!!!</p>	

Practice your routine as often as possible.