

PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT IMAGERY SUMMARY

Reference: Rushall, B. S. (2001). *Mental skills training for sports* (3rd edition). Spring Valley, CA: Sports Science Associates [<http://brentrushall.com/mskills/index.htm>].

1. Precompetition rehearsals of intended physical, cognitive, and emotional components of performance prepare an athlete to be at a high level of readiness at the start of a contest.
2. The more familiar an athlete is with a task, the more accurate and beneficial will be the neuromuscular facilitation that results from imagery.
3. Skill imagery should be interspersed throughout physical activity.
4. Skill imagery should be performed when physical activity is not possible.
5. Mediocre athletes concentrate on factors other than performance in the precompetition period.
6. Mental rehearsal is better served when it is practiced specifically for an event and its constituent skills.
7. Irrelevant imagery diverts the body's capacities and prepares it for irrelevant tasks.
8. Performance enhancement imagery is a skill: it needs to be performed consistently, produce replicated motor patterns, and take a constant amount of time.
9. Performance enhancement imagery is most effective with advanced or superior level athletes.
10. Slow-motion rehearsals of actions elicit neural patterns that are foreign to patterns associated with real-time movements.
11. Both research and practitioners support the benefits of movement-speed specific imagery.
12. Positive imagery produces physiological responses that are more efficient for a particular performance.
13. The wording and content of what is imagined is critical: it should focus only on successful or desirable performance aspects.
14. Imagery should be performed to experience all the senses in the manner in which they occur during a performance, that is, from an internal perspective.
15. The feelings that occur in performance are particularly important and, if imagined correctly, will produce minor movements and physiological responses.
16. The best combination of physical activity and imagery is to do the activity at competition intensity during the warm-up period before competitions.
17. Performance enhancement imagery is only a supplementary procedure to that of specific warm-up activities and should be performed when specific physical activity is not possible.

18. "Relaxation" is not necessary for effective imagery to be performed. Close to the commencement of a contest, it is incompatible with desirable precompetition activities.
19. The amount of performance enhancement imagery that should be performed should increase for a number of days prior to an important contest with a marked increase (possibly by an amount as much as five times) the day before or on the day of the competition.
20. Performance enhancement imagery is facilitated while looking at the exact place of the contest.
21. When sections of a performance sequence are imagined out of context, performance is not enhanced.
22. Performance enhancement imagery must include all the thoughts that will be associated with and used during the performance.
23. Performance enhancement imagery differs markedly from learning imagery.

The development of performance enhancement imagery skills is not a simple procedure. For it to be executed correctly, and to achieve the maximum effect, a number of mental activities have to be learned. This section involves exercises for the attainment of acceptable levels of image control and vividness, internal content, sensory recall, and the structuring of performance-specific experiences.