

Sports Psychology For Dummies Cheat Sheet

From [Sports Psychology For Dummies](#)

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Being a successful athlete is about more than just physical strength and agility — your mind plays a key part in your winning performance. You can use sports psychology techniques to build confidence and improve your focus. Sports psychology isn't limited to athletes — as a coach, you can use sports psychology to help your athletes achieve their goals.

Improving Your Focus with Sports Psychology

Focus is one of the most powerful tools in sports psychology. Whatever sport you compete in, the ability to focus is essential to success. When you're in the middle of a practice or competition, does your mind ever wander? If so, your performance is taking a hit, because you aren't completely focused on the task at hand. You can improve your focus by following these tips:

- **Know what you need to focus on.** The clearer you are about what you want to focus on, the more likely you'll be to stay focused on the factors that contribute to your success.
- **Focus on what you can control.** You have control over yourself and your own actions and attitudes — nothing more. Keep your focus here. If you focus on outcomes (things you have no control over), you're creating unnecessary anxiety. Focus on the process and you increase the likelihood of positive results happening.

- **Stay relaxed under pressure.** When you're stressed and anxious, your focus drops. Find ways to stay calm in high-pressure situations, such as taking deep breaths, stretching muscles to loosen them, engaging in effective routines to keep your focus where it needs to be, or listening to music that keeps you centered.
- **Use cue words.** Cue words are simple words and phrases that remind you of your focus points. Repeating words and phrases such as *relax*, *play hard*, or *quick feet* will remind you to focus on what you need to do. If your mind is focused on your cue words, your body will follow.
- **Develop effective routines.** A routine is like a funnel — it channels your focus and gets you ready to compete. Your routines help you maintain your focus on the right things and prevent many potential distractions from entering your mind. For example, listen to three or four songs on your iPod before games to get yourself ready, or eat a certain meal, arrive at the playing field in enough time to get prepared, or go through a specific type of warm-up.
- **Use mental imagery.** Practice seeing yourself perform exactly as you want to perform, focusing exactly as you want to focus. The more you train your mind to focus on the right things, the more it will respond.

Mental imagery is simply seeing yourself perform as you desire long before you even step on the field of play. Imagery prepares you to see how you'll perform, trains you to think about what's most important in great performance, and allows you to relax by being focused on things within your control and that matter to great performance.

- **Rate your focus daily.** Keep a journal in which you rate your level of focus before and after each practice or competition. Simple daily evaluations are critical to improving your focus. By consistently being consciously aware of improving and evaluating your focus, you'll automatically do so. This type of daily "mental muscle" work will gradually improve your focus in practice and games.