

Visualisation

Confidence & Concentration

What is Visualisation?

Visualisation or mental rehearsal is creating or re-creating a movement or a situation in your mind.

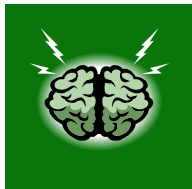
It is a form of mental practice. Use your mind to 'see' yourself doing a specific skill or a routine.

What helps Visualisation?

1. Make the image as vivid as possible. Use all your senses – 'see' yourself on the apparatus; 'hear' the sounds in the gym; 'feel' your body touching the equipment; 'smell' and 'taste' your environment; 'kinaesthetic' feel the body's position in space.
2. Control the image. Use perfect techniques and routines to change poor performances into good ones. Choose what parts you want to visualise.
3. Both the internal and external perspectives are important. See yourself from the inside looking out as you would normally but also watch yourself as a spectator would see you.

Why use visualisation?

- ✚ Visualising physical activities can produce neuromuscular and physiological reactions in the body by making the nerves and muscles 'think' they are actually working, changing heart and respiratory rates and increasing adrenaline production.



- *The Carpenter Effect*: Visualising movements actually produces impulses to the muscles as if you are doing the skill or the routine – you are practicing with your muscles, etc at a very tiny level.
- *Neuromuscular Facilitation*: The neuromuscular pathways associated with a particular movement work better with practice.

- ✚ It gives you extra practice when you physically can't.
- ✚ It enhances your skills and performance.
- ✚ It allows you to plan your goals and rehearse your strategies and tactics to achieve those goals.
- ✚ It helps you control your emotional state when you are in a competition.
- ✚ It helps build self-confidence.
- ✚ It helps you to remain calm when under stress.
- ✚ It improves your concentration.
- ✚ It helps you to learn new skills more quickly.

Principles of Visualisation

1. Use all of your senses.
2. Use only **positive** images.
3. Use real time.
4. Rehearse **perfect** performances.
5. Use internal and external imaging.
6. Imagery must match competency (only visualise doing skills that you can do or are learning).
7. Imagery must be realistic for the situation (except when building self-confidence).

How can I visualise successfully?

- ✚ Sit or lie comfortably in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
- ✚ Relax and control your breathing – take a deep breath, fill your lungs, slowly breathe out and consciously relax your shoulders and neck muscles – do this at least three times.
- ✚ Clear your mind of all other thoughts.
- ✚ Use all of your senses.
- ✚ Make it as realistic and vivid as possible.
- ✚ Visualise only positive and successful performances with perfect technique.
- ✚ Visualise in real time - not in slow motion.
- ✚ Practice only for a limited time.
- ✚ When comfortable with the techniques of visualisation, use it as a part of your preparation for a routine, just before you go on the apparatus.

When do I use visualisation?

- ✚ You can visualise every day, if you want to.
- ✚ You should 'see' yourself performing a skill immediately before attempting it in training.
- ✚ You should visualise yourself doing full routines on each apparatus each night leading up to a competition.
- ✚ The closer you get to competition, the more you should use your visualisation techniques.
- ✚ You should stop and visualise yourself doing a full routine on the apparatus just before you start on that apparatus in a competition.
- ✚ Other techniques that will help you improve visualisation:
 - It helps to face our fears and to control them. See a nervous feeling as a substance in your body. What does it look like? Confront it head on, wrap it up in a box and then make the box shrink. Place that tiny box somewhere outside your body, such as a rubbish bin, so that it can be taken away.
 - See a negative image (eg, a wrong technique or you being afraid or not confident of doing a skill or a routine) as frozen on a big TV screen right in front of you. Frozen in a small box in the bottom left corner is an image you doing right thing. When you say or think 'play', this positive image of you 'enlarges' and fills the screen. Do this three or four times a day and you should be able to see the positive scene exclusively.
 - Visualise your major opponents as smaller, weaker or sillier (eg, with their head shrunk to the size of a tennis ball, or with duck's feet, or forever falling over).

Some other comments about visualisation.

- ✚ Use frequently as it needs practice, just as physical skills do.
- ✚ Start simple and easy and gradually build up the complexity of images.
- ✚ Replace 'finishing' images with 'starting' images to combat nerves.
- ✚ If you can't 'see' yourself performing then watch a video of yourself, then close your eyes and enact an instant replay of what you have just seen.
- ✚ Only focus on what **you** can control.
- ✚ Practice your imagery of perfect performance with someone talking to you, or with the TV on. It will help you eliminate distractions and make the visualised image more realistic.

Visualisations must always be perfect. You are in control and you must make the situation perfect. Your subconscious does not know the difference between reality and fantasy. By visualising a skill or a routine perfectly you are training your subconscious to know only the perfect way to do a skill or a routine and that is what it will tell your body to do every time you do it in training or in competition.