

Performance Routine Worksheet 1– Developing Pre-event Routines

For Coaches

Instructions: Lead your athletes through this activity. If possible, try to include all individuals that can make a significant contribution to the discussion (e.g., assistant coaches, mental training consultant, nutritionist, strength and conditioning coaches). Plan for approximately 30 minutes to complete all steps. Keep one eye on the clock to make sure you have time to complete all steps.

Materials: Based on the age, maturity, and competitive level of your athletes, you can adapt this activity. You can have them complete the worksheet or write information directly into the timeline. The timeline can be adapted to be more specific or less specific. We have included a sample of a timeline that may be appropriate for younger athletes (under 12 years) as well as one that could be used for older athletes (12+ years) and athletes at higher competitive levels. You know your athletes best, so adapt based on what works for them! We have included sections for both Plan A (the ideal routine) and Plan B (the back-up plan). Athletes do not need to develop a Plan B for every possible thing that can go wrong; rather, they should identify Plan B for common disruptions to the routine (e.g., not having enough time to get ready in the morning) or for disruptions that they often worry about (e.g., What if...we run out of yogurt and I can't have my usual pre-game smoothie?).

- 1. 5-7 min: As a group, discuss what the athletes currently eat before a competition/practice.** If you have a nutritionist or someone with knowledge in the nutritional requirement for your type of sport, have them lead this portion. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss optimal nutrition with your athletes if you haven't already done so. At the end of the 5-7 minutes make sure the athletes identify what they will eat before a competition, when they will do it, and a back-plan if they don't have access to that food (e.g., store doesn't have it).
- 2. 5-7 min: As a group, discuss the ways that athletes currently prepare physically for their competition.** Ask the athletes what they are currently doing if you don't have a specific routine set in place already. If you do have a routine (e.g., warm-up), this may be a good time to ask them how they feel it is working. If you have a strength and conditioning coach or someone who has extra knowledge in warming up properly for a game, have them lead this portion. At the end of the 5-7 minutes have athletes identify what they will do to physically prepare for a competition, when they will do it, and a back-plan if for whatever reason the planned workout is not an option (e.g., arrive late to a game).
- 3. 5-10 min: As a group, discuss the ways that athletes currently prepare mentally for their competition.** Have them share the purpose of their strategies. This aspect of the routine may be more difficult for the athletes to really understand. Provide them with suggestions. For example, do they listen to music to relax or get psyched up? Do they use mental imagery to help them focus on how they are going to execute a skill or routine? **After discussing the different methods used by the various athletes, allow 2-3 minutes for them to record how they want to mentally prepare for competition.**

4. **2-3 min: Discuss any additional actions or thoughts that your athletes would like to add to their routine.** Make sure that they are relevant to the actions they will be doing during competition. If there are other tasks required of them (e.g., weigh in for wrestling matches, team rule of no screen time 2 hours before a game), make sure they have those included in their routines.

5. **2-3 min: Encourage athletes to write out their pre-event routine sequence in a way that is easy for them to follow and to keep it in a place where they will see it** (e.g., a copy in their sport bag and a copy posted in their bedroom). Some athletes may choose to use a checklist or timeline (see sample) written on a piece of paper. Others may choose to set alarms on their ipod or cell phone to keep them on track. Allow athletes to be creative in how they develop a representation of the elements of their routine – as long as the key information is in their routine, they can create a representation of the routine that is meaningful to them.

Creating Effective Performance Routines

What are the potential benefits of using performance routines?

- Improve performance
- Increase consistency of skill execution
- Enhance ability to focus
- Improve concentration
- Decrease the impact of distractions
- Prevent athletes from dwelling on the negatives
- Divert athletes cognitions from irrelevant thoughts to relevant thoughts
- Trigger automaticity of well learnt movement patterns
- Enhance athletes recall of what it felt like to be in certain physical and psychological states

Different types of Performance Routines:

Pre-event routines

- Sequence of **actions** or **thoughts** that you carry out before a **competition**
- These actions or thoughts must **relate to the activity** you are about to perform
- What do you eat? How do you prepare physically? How do you prepare mentally?
- *You are working on this type of performance routine in this activity!*

Pre-performance Routines

- Sequence of **actions** or **thoughts** that you carry out before performing a specific **skill**
- These actions or thoughts must relate to the activity you are about to perform
- For Example: before a serve in volleyball, a throw-in for soccer, a free-throw in basketball, a javelin throw, or a putt in golf
- You can adapt a pre-performance routine into a race plan, for events where athletes may perform the same skill throughout the event (e.g., running) but may have different actions or thoughts used to prepare for different sections of the event (e.g., first 50m versus last 50m of a 400m event).
- *Performance Worksheet 2 helps you to develop these types of routines!*

These differ from superstitious behaviours because superstitious behaviours aren't relevant to the activity being performed (e.g., not washing your uniform).

Tips for how to make the most of performance routines!

- Be consistent in what you do and think
- Be consistent with how long your performance routine is and when you carry out the specific actions and thoughts in your routine
- The actions and thoughts in your routine should relate to the actual activity
- Pre-performance routines should be individualized to you
- Athletes should practice their performance routines in training leading up to competition
- It is ok to adjust your routine based on changes you make to your technique or to try a new strategy that may work better for you (e.g., change cue words, try using imagery as part of the routine).

Pre-event Worksheet

1. What will I eat?

When will I eat it? (e.g., how many minutes or hours before a competition)

What is my alternative plan if I can't eat my original choice (e.g., what are some good alternative foods?)

2. How will I prepare physically for my competition? (e.g., warm-up routine)

When will I physically prepare for my competition?

What is my alternative plan if I can't do my typical physical routine? (e.g., what is the most important part?)

3. How will I prepare mentally for my competition (e.g., mental imagery, listen to music, look at previously set goals)

When will I mentally prepare for my competition?

What is my alternative plan if I can't do my typical mental routine?

4. Is there anything else I would like to add to my pre competition routine?

Pre-Event Timeline

Time	Tasks (Plan A)	Plan B (What if...)
Night Before Event		
Morning		
Travel to Venue		
Individual Preparation		
Team Preparation		
Warm Up		
Final Preparations		
Event Start Time!		
Post-Event Recovery		
Between Event Checks*		

*This section is optional. It can be very helpful if your athletes typically compete in multiple events or have multiple games in a single day. This encourages them to create a plan for putting the first event behind them and refocusing their preparation on the second event of the day.

Checklist: Does your plan include...

- What you will eat?
- How you will prepare physically?
- How you will prepare mentally?
- Required team or event activities (e.g., sign in, team meeting, weigh in, press interviews)?

Sample Pre-Event Routine for Younger Athletes

Time	Tasks (Plan A)	Plan B (What if...)
Night Before Event	Pack equipment bag Bedtime (9pm)	If I can't sleep...I will listen to calming music
Morning	Wake Up (6am) ✓ Shower & get dressed ✓ Breakfast: oatmeal with walnuts & blueberries, milk, orange ✓ Double check that bag is packed	If I don't have enough time to make breakfast: banana, peanut butter on whole grain toast that I can eat in the car
Travel to Venue	Get in car with parents (9am) ✓ Listen to ipod pre-game playlist ✓ Review my goals for today's event	If I forget my ipod: Listen to favourite radio station
Individual Preparation	Arrive at venue (10am) ✓ Sign in at registration desk ✓ Imagery of the event to make me feel confident and prepared ✓ Change into uniform ✓ Have my morning snack	If we are running late, I can do my imagery in the car
Team Preparation	Team Meeting (11am) ✓ Review key points to focus on ✓ Complete warm-up drills with teammate ✓ Stretch & see trainer for any required taping	If I miss the team meeting: I will ask a teammate about what they talked about
Warm Up	On-ice/field/track warm up (12:15pm) ✓ Be in change room 5 minutes before warm-up to hear coach's instructions ✓ Use self-talk to stay focused on drills rather than on opponents	If we can't get on the field/ice/track to do start warm-up on time: I will find a space to warm up
Final Preparations	Team Pep talk (12:45pm) ✓ Bathroom break ✓ Hydration check (refill water bottle)	If I don't have enough time to refill my water bottle: have my mom refill it for me
Event Start Time!	Event begins (1pm) ✓ Self-talk: "I am ready. Let's do this!"	If the event doesn't start on time: I will go through my warm up again to make sure my body is ready
Post-Event Recovery	Event Ends (2pm) ✓ Debrief with coach & reflect on my performance ✓ Stretch	
Between Event Checks*	1 hour between events ✓ Snack & Hydrate ✓ Ice-bath ✓ Set goals for next event	If I don't have access to an ice bath: Use bags of ice instead

Sample Pre-Event Routine for Older Athletes/Higher Competitive Levels

Time	Tasks (Plan A)	Plan B (What if...)
Night Before Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pack and check equipment bag. Prepare & pack meals for game day. ✓ Relax – listen to music, read, watch TV. ✓ 20 min. of stretching and relaxation to calming music. ✓ 10 min. imagery to review competition plan and see myself performing at my best tomorrow. <p>Go to bed around 10:30pm.</p>	If I can't sleep... do progressive muscle relaxation (see anxiety regulation worksheet)
Morning	<p>Wake Up (6am)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Shower ✓ Breakfast: oatmeal with walnuts & blueberries, milk, orange ✓ Wake up, go for light jog/workout. While jogging, run through game plan. ✓ Review my competition plan. Think about how I will respond to disruptions in my ideal plan (review your "Plan B" strategies). 	If I don't have enough time: I will skip the jog/workout and use imagery to experience the kinesthetic sensations I would feel on the jog/workout followed by my game plan
Travel to Venue	<p>Get in bus (9am)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Listen to ipod pre-game playlist ✓ Imagery of key skills/strategies 	If the bus is really noisy/distracting: I will practice my focusing skills to block out distractions before doing my imagery
Individual Preparation	<p>Arrive at venue (10am)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Get changed into uniform & check equipment. Light snack. ✓ Soak up atmosphere of venue so I know what to expect prior to performance (e.g., layout of facility, location of bathrooms, etc.). 	If I arrive late: I will eat my snack while briefly checking out the venue
Team Preparation	<p>Team Meeting (11am)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pre-game team meeting and warm-up. ✓ Go through your warm-up routine. See trainer if necessary. ✓ Hydration check – do I have enough water? 	If the coach cannot make the team meeting: As the captain, I will take charge by discussing team goals, going through our typical team warm-up and follow our typical plan without him/her
Warm Up	<p>On-ice/field/track warm up (12:15pm)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 30 min to start time: Check arousal level. How do I feel? Do I need to pump up or calm down? Use planned strategies to get in the right mindset. 	If there is a game delay: Find a spot to do drills that require less space. Use imagery to run through drills that you won't have time for so you feel like you warmed up those skills.
Final Preparations	<p>10 min to start time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bathroom break ✓ Hydration check (refill water bottle) ✓ Final check of equipment. ✓ Spend 2-3min. imagining start of event. Start last part of your warm-up routine. 	Your coach can't give you final instructions because he/she is tending to another athlete: Go over the goals you have set, practice your

Time	Tasks (Plan A)	Plan B (What if...)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Listen to coach's final instructions/pre-game words & do team cheer. Take your position. Take a final deep inhale/exhale and say "I am strong, confident, and ready" 	Deep breathing, then use your self-talk cues.
Event Start Time!	<p>Game begins (1pm)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Self-talk: "I feel great – let's go!" 	Rain delay: I will physically stay warmed up then use imagery to consider how the rain will influence the game. How will it influence how my body feels? How the equipment feels?
Post-Event Recovery	<p>Event ends (2pm)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stretching ✓ Debrief with coach ✓ Individual reflection 	You have to leave the venue immediately because of other commitments: You stretch quickly, then have your snack, rehydrate and do your individual reflection in the car, and arrange to talk to coach at next practice.
Between Event Checks *	<p>2 hours between events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Snack & Hydration ✓ See trainer for ice and/or taping needs ✓ Spend time with family & friends <p>1 hour before event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Time alone to re-focus and set goals for next event ✓ Imagery of how you want to perform ✓ Start warm-up routine to your favourite playlist 	If I don't have time to spend with friends who came to watch me compete, tell them I will text them later to meet up.