Performance Routines Worksheet 2 –Developing Pre-Performance Routines

For Coaches

Instructions: Lead your athletes through this activity. This activity differs from many of the other activities we have provided because we have provided very general guidelines that you and your athletes can use to design a pre-performance routine that is tailored for the athletes' unique situation. Plan for approximately 15 minutes to complete all steps. If you are developing a pre-performance routine for a continuous skill (e.g., a race plan for a skier), you made need up to 30 minutes to complete all steps.

1. Select key skill to focus on in the pre-performance routine (e.g., a skill the athlete struggles with, gets distracted during, or is a new skill that they are working on)
2. Identify key technical points for optimal execution of the skill (e.g., create a checklist)
3. Identify how they will know they achieved technical points (e.g., movements, feelings, direction of gaze).
4. Identify strategies to help them execute the skill (e.g., cue words, imagery, breathing, external cues)
5. Put it all together into routine!

***We have provided a couple examples that you may choose to use as a template with your athletes. The table uses the example of a free-throw in basketball to demonstrate steps 2-4. Step 5 is illustrated in the ABC's example. Please be aware that pre-performance routines may look very different for discrete skills (e.g., golf putt, basketball free-throw, baseball pitch, volleyball serve) than continuous skills (swimming, rowing, racing). We have provided an example of a pre-performance routine embedded within a race plan using a 50m swim event.

Regardless of the skill, encourage athletes to create a pre-performance routine that is meaningful to them!

Table for Creating Strategies for Key Skill Technical Points
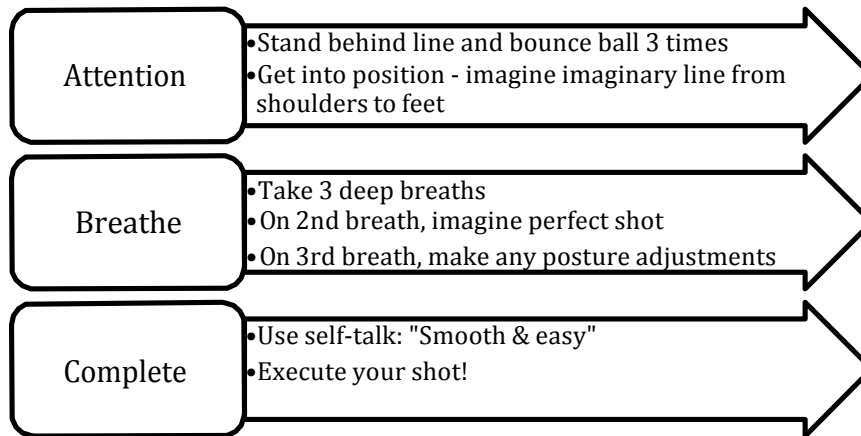
Skill: basketball free-throw

Step by Step Actions	Indicators	Strategies
Line up just behind foul line	Position of toes & spacing of feet, shoulder width apart.	Look at toes and line. Imagine a line straight down from shoulders to toes.
Identify target & focus on shot	Visual target; clear mind	Bounce ball 3 times to clear mind. Look at target. 3 deep breaths.
Adopt correct stance	Posture – feel bent knees, straight back, shooting elbow in and pointed down, relaxed muscles	Imagery of perfect shot.
Execute shot with confidence	Feel fluid motion from knees, up trunk, through arm. Clear mind – worry free!	Self-talk: "Smooth" and "Easy"
Follow through	Feel ball release with backspin, arm continues in motion, wrist snaps	Imagery of perfect shot.

***This step could be used for less experienced athletes that may want help identifying the key components of their skill, and strategies they can use to create the best pre-performance routine for them. It may be helpful to have athletes practice the skill several times immediately before they do this activity so that they can recognize what they did to prepare, if they were consistent, and if they do the same thing in competition.

The ABC's example shows how this table can be translated into a specific pre-performance routine that the athlete would execute before each free-throw.

Example of Pre Performance Routine for a Discrete Skill

The ABC's (Attention, Breathing, Complete) of a Basketball Free-throw

Attention	•Stand behind line and bounce ball 3 times •Get into position - imagine imaginary line from shoulders to feet
Breathe	•Take 3 deep breaths • On 2nd breath, imagine perfect shot •On 3rd breath, make any posture adjustments
Complete	•Use self-talk: "Smooth & easy" •Execute your shot!

***Here is an example of a way in which athletes may draw out their pre-performance routines. The number of steps, the acronym (e.g., ABC), and the way it is presented are all up to the athlete. For athletes completing a discrete task or play they may want to use a checklist format or saying to remind them of the steps in their routine. Essentially the goal of this is to transfer the information generated in the table into an easy to remember visual representation or series of cue words that is meaningful to the athlete.

For a new pre-performance routine, athletes may want to create a visual representation like this that they keep in their sport bag (e.g., on a cue card) or as an image on their ipod, tablet, or smart phone. Once the routine is familiar, athletes will be able to execute it automatically.

Example of Pre Performance Routine for a Continuous Skill

Race Plan for a 50 m swim
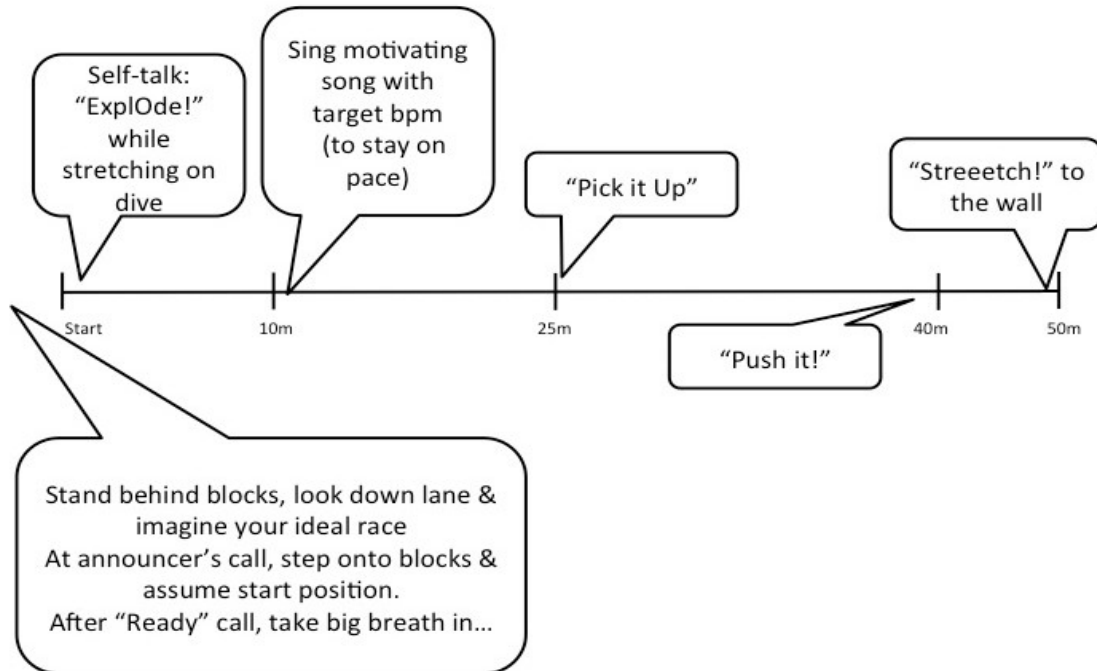
***Here is an example of how an athlete may draw out a race plan that includes pre-performance cues for each part of the race. While he/she is completing the same task (e.g., butterfly stroke) for the entire race, there are variations to the task that are important at different time points (e.g., faster pace, stretching to reach the finish).

For continuous tasks or when athletes do not have a lot of time between skills (e.g., between skills within a gymnastics floor routine), this method of creating pre-performance cues may be more appealing for the athlete.