

## Performance Cues for Athletes Worksheet

Cues are words or short phrases an athlete can think or say aloud while preparing to perform a skill or movement (Hagan et al., 2019). Cues can be used as a pre-performance routine to help an athlete trigger the appropriate mindset or action, as they can help with attention focusing, distraction elimination, anxiety management, and mental and physical preparation. Cues are used to help an athlete attend to only the information relevant to the task at hand – sometimes referred to as *locking in* - which can lead to improved performance and increased confidence (Hagan et al., 2019; Ikulayo & Semidara, 2011).

Cues are thought or spoken immediately before performing a task (i.e., free throw, penalty shot, dive). They can be any task-relevant word or phrase the athlete chooses, most often they are instructional or motivational in nature (Latinjak et al., 2019). Below are some examples of cue words and phrases, and situations in which an athlete may use them. These can be helpful when guiding an athlete in the development of a cue. To be effective, cues must be paired with an action and practiced. If an athlete develops a cue word to help reduce anxiety before performing a free throw in a game, they should use the same cue word when practicing. Incorporating the cue in all situations is important as the more often it is used, the better the cue can help trigger the appropriate mindset and movement.

On the next page is a table that will guide you through cue development. There are some examples of cues words available to get you thinking. First, think of a situation in your sport during which you feel anxious, have trouble focusing, or start overthinking. Then think of a cue to tie to that situation (examples can be seen below). Once you've created a cue, explain how you believe it will help you in the sport situation you identified.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Cue Word</b>	<b>How will it help?</b>
Receiving a serve in volleyball	<i>“Up”</i>	This cue will help me not overthink how I receive the ball, as long as I get it up, we will be able to set up a play
Entering the water on a dive	<i>“Smooth”</i>	This cue will remind me to keep my form as I enter the water
Preparing to take a free throw	<i>“Deep breath”</i>	This cue will help me center myself and remain loose before I take my shot