Pre-Performance Routine

ROUTINES can help focus your concentration and mental preparation.

Pre-performance routines help you ignore external and internal distractions and let your performance be smooth and automatic.

The best routines will focus on feeling rather than specific skill components. This helps your performance stay automatic rather than letting your brain get in the way.

If your coach gives you specific skill information to improve your performance, practice it in your mind BEFORE you start your event. (Make sure to just focus on one or two things to improve, so you don't overload yourself with things to focus on!) This helps program your body with what your mind wants you to do. Then, in your event, just let your body compete.

In between events or attempts, it is easy for your mind to wander. Routines can help you stay focused, and might be something as simple as sitting down, taking deep breaths, and imaging what you want to do.

Some routines are simple, some are complex, and some border on superstition (like not washing your uniform all season—PLEASE don’t do this!!!)

Your pre-performance routine must be comfortable and help you focus.

What you can control: Yourself
Your training
Your physical preparation/energy
Your mental preparation/emotional state

What you cannot control: Other competitors
Coaches
Spectators
Conditions of the track
Weather conditions (driving to the meet & outdoor meets)

Your pre-performance routine should focus on what you can control, what you can feel in your body (not just on the outcome of the event).

2 Examples of Pre-performance Routines for a Basketball Free Throw:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning Athlete</th>
<th>Advanced Athlete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Take a deep breath</td>
<td>1. Take a deep breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. See yourself shooting</td>
<td>2. See ball go through the basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Think about timing of leg with arm extension.</td>
<td>3. Feel the perfect shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use cue words such as &quot;smooth&quot; or &quot;push-off&quot;</td>
<td>4. Look at the hoop</td>
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</tbody>
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As you can see, the beginning athlete still should focus on the "process" of the skill, while the advanced athlete should focus on the "feel" of the skill since their body already knows the process.


Katie Booth, Ph.D. - UMKC Track and Field - 2005-2006
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Many, if not all of you, already have things you consistently do before each event or attempt. You do these things each day in practice or at a meet without thinking about them. The key at a meet is to be consistent. Each week your competition and your surroundings change, but YOUR routine should remain the same. Your behavior before you compete should be that of a consistent routine that gets you FOCUSED AND READY TO GO!

YOUR TASK:

1. Write down in detail what your current pre-performance routine is. Think back to what you did/or will do immediately before you begin your race or attempt. Write down the number of times you do something (jump in the air before getting in the blocks, step backwards before beginning your approach, etc.). Also, write down how many times you look or move your head in specific directions. Basically, give as much detail as you can in the specific order that you physically (what you do) and cognitively (what you think about) prepare yourself right before your event starts. Most pre-performance routines have 2-15 elements. If you have more than 15, it's too many!!

PRE-PERFORMANCE ROUTINE: Date: ________________________

2. After your next meet, write down your pre-performance routine again in as much detail as possible. Track what changes and what stays the same. Continue to do this until you have a routine that works best for you, maximizing its usefulness. Go over your routine with your event coach or myself. See if it makes sense to another person who is familiar with your performance style and the technical parts of your event.

PRE-PERFORMANCE ROUTINE: Date: ________________________


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