



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission



Competition Routines

A competition routine helps you to be consistent in your physical and mental preparation. This will give you a good chance to perform your best.

Most athletes have a standard physical warm-up they go through before competing that typically includes stretching, running, drills and tactical practice. A similar approach should be taken with mental preparation. An athlete should have specific thoughts, words, images and feelings leading up to a competition to optimally prepare the mind for top performance.

WHY IS MENTAL PREPARATION IMPORTANT TO PERFORMANCE?

Mental Preparation can help you to:

- > **get 'in the zone'** – the main purpose of mental preparation is to get you into the right mindset
- > **increase your confidence** – when you are able to see and feel past and future successes as part of your mental preparation, you feel more in control and confident
- > **control your mental energy** – it is important to manage your mental energy so that you are not too flat or too energised. During preparation, you can listen to certain songs on your phone to get energised about competing or imagine a relaxing scene to slow your thoughts
- > **narrow your focus** – technical cues ('explode off the blocks', 'keep elbow high') can be integrated into your preparation to direct your attention towards the things you can control
- > **create certainty** – mental preparation can be a 'security blanket': something to turn to in the stressful moments leading up to the competition. It brings consistency to your preparation and performance.

HOW DO COMPETITION ROUTINES WORK?

1. The **first step** is to determine what mindset you want. That is, what mindset gives you the best performance? You can work this out by reflecting on your best and worst performances in the past.
2. The **second step** is to decide on what preparation will help you to create your ideal mindset on competition day.
3. The **third step** is to design a competition routine that incorporates your physical and mental preparation. This routine may start the night before the competition and continue until the end of the competition day.

OTHER STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING COMPETITION DAY

- > Be aware of expectations (yours and others) and your emotional responses to these expectations.
- > Set challenging but realistic goals for yourself in order to maintain optimal motivation and performance.
- > Talk with your parents/family, friends, partner, etc., about how they can best support you leading into and during competition.
- > Draw on the experiences of other athletes and talk to individuals who have negotiated similar competitions and preparations in the past.
- > Stay positive, block or minimise negative thoughts and believe that you have the ability/resources to meet the challenge you face. These strategies all help to create the self-belief and confidence that form the bedrock of your performance.

TAKE ACTION

You can develop this skill further with the support of a performance psychologist. If you have access to a performance psychologist speak to them of your interest in this area. You can also go to our free on-line course designed to help you develop this skill. To complete the course, register here: <https://learning.ausport.gov.au> and search the topic of interest. Finally, your coach, state institute or academy, or national sporting organisation are good places to start looking for further help.