



# Preparation

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## Relax & Visualize Activity: Middle School

*Have your athletes sit or lie down comfortably on the floor. Take 5-10 minutes to go through this progressive muscle relaxation, reading it aloud in a calm voice:*

Become aware of your breathing, and notice how your abdomen rises and falls with each breath.

Now take a long, slow, deep breath in through your nose, all the way down into your stomach. Hold the breath for just a moment, and then exhale through your mouth. Allow your breath to carry away all stress and tension as the air floods out of your lungs.

Take another slow breath in through your nose. Fill your lungs completely. Hold it for a moment...and release the breath through your mouth. Empty your lungs completely with your out-breath.

Take a third deep breath in. Hold it for a moment, and then let it go.

Feel that your body has already undergone a change. The tension in your body has begun to loosen and subside.

Now let your breathing rhythm return to normal.

During this relaxation I will ask you to tense various muscles throughout your body. Please do this without straining. Just contract each muscle firmly but gently as you breathe in. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can simply relax and breathe normally.

Bring your awareness to your feet and toes. Breathe in deeply through your nose, and as you do, gradually curl your toes down and tense the muscles in the soles of your feet. Hold your breath for just a few seconds and then release the muscles in your feet as you breathe out. Feel the tension in your feet wash away as you exhale. Notice how different your feet feel when tensed and when they are relaxed.

Now give your attention to your shoulder muscles and the muscles in your neck. As you slowly draw in a nice deep breath, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly. Now breathe out completely, and allow your contracted muscles to go loose and limp.

Feel the heaviness in your body now. Enjoy the feeling. Feel yourself becoming heavier and heavier. Feel yourself becoming more and more relaxed.

Now it's time to let go of all the tension in your arms and hands. Let's start with your upper arms.

As you breathe in, tighten the muscles in your upper arms. Hold that breath and that contraction for just a moment and breathe all the way out. You may feel a warm, burning sensation in your muscles when you tighten them. Feel how relaxing it is to release that tightness and to breathe away all tension.



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Now bring your awareness to your forearms. As you breathe in, curl your hands inwards as though you are trying to touch the inside of your elbows with your fingertips. Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Now, take another breath in and tightly clench your fists. When you have finished breathing in, hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Notice any feelings of buzzing or throbbing. Your hands are becoming very soft and relaxed.

Take a couple of nice, long, slow breaths now, and just relax.

Now tighten the muscles in your face by squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your lips together. As you do, breathe in fully. Hold it...now breathe out and relax all your facial muscles. Feel your face softening.

Now bring your awareness to the muscles in your jaw. Take a deep breath in, and then open your mouth as wide as you can. Feel your jaw muscles stretching and tightening. Now exhale and allow your mouth to gently close.

Again, fill your lungs with air and then open your mouth wide. Now let your mouth relax and let your breath flood all the way out.

You are now completely relaxed from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.

### **Suggested Questions:**

- 1. Was this exercise difficult for you? Why or why not?*
- 2. How can you use this technique to prepare yourself for a game or competition?*
- 3. Do you think you'd have the same result if you simply focused on your breathing?*
- 4. Can this technique be helpful in other areas of your life?*

[adapted from The Guided Meditation Site]



# Preparation



## Visualize A Sport-Specific Scenario: High School Activity

*Have your athletes sit or lie down comfortably on the floor. Take 5-10 minutes to go through this progressive muscle relaxation, reading it aloud in a calm voice:*

1. Keeping your eyes closed, visualize yourself achieving success during competition.  
*(Success could relate to a specific skill, like swinging a bat or serving a volleyball, or implementing perfect form. It could also be a positive outcome, like scoring a penalty kick in soccer or coming from behind to win the team relay at a swim meet.)*
2. Ask them to focus on as many senses as possible, such as smell, sound, and touch, while mentally performing a skill.  
*(Example: mentally place a basketball player at a free throw line for a game-winning shot; talk about the crowd noises, the smell of popcorn, the feel of the ball as they dribble, and their perfect form as they shoot.)*
3. Have them pick one skill or outcome in the sport and practice it ten times, making sure it is a perfect performance without any errors.  
*(Encourage them to be inside their body, feeling the skills, and not on the outside, simply watching them. The former is more effective.)*

### **Suggested Questions:**

1. *Was this exercise difficult for you? Why or why not?*
2. *Do you think it's important to be relaxed before applying visual imagery? Why or why not?*
3. *What senses came up in your imagery?*
4. *Was it difficult to practice perfect imagery without flaws? Why or why not?*
5. *Were you able to be inside your body, performing the task, or on the outside watching? Which do you think is more effective?*
6. *Could you use visualization in other areas of your life?*