



BRING YOUR MIND TO THE GAME
SPORT PSYCHOLOGY
&
MENTAL TRAINING

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The 8 Step Pre-Performance Protocol

A structured mental reset that helps you regulate your mind, steady your body, and enter high pressure moments with clarity and confidence.

The Science Behind Pre-Performance Routines

Under pressure, the brain naturally shifts toward **threat detection**. The amygdala becomes more active. Heart rate rises. Attention narrows. Doubt becomes louder.

A structured pre-performance routine does three important things:

1. It re-engages the **prefrontal cortex** so decision making stays sharp.
2. It regulates the **nervous system** so your body does not overreact.
3. It activates **memory networks** linked to past success, increasing expectancy of competence.

Elite performers do not leave this to chance. They deliberately prepare their nervous system before they perform.


You can complete this in 5 to 15 minutes depending on time available.

The Protocol

You can choose a combination of any of the steps below that work for you.

1. List Your Strengths

 The Science



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Under stress, the brain shows negative bias. The amygdala highlights risk and weakness. Writing strengths re activates the prefrontal cortex and restores balanced self perception. It shifts attention toward capability.

✓ What To Do

Write or mentally list:

- 3 technical strengths
- 2 physical strengths
- 1 mental strength

Be specific. Not “I am good.” Instead, “My footwork creates space under pressure.”

This reminds your brain who you are at your best.

2. Recall Past Wins

🧠 The Science

Recalling past success activates similar neural circuits as actual achievement. The brain encodes it as evidence. This increases confidence and reduces uncertainty.


✓ What To Do

Recall 3 to 4 moments where you:

- Stayed composed
- Adapted well
- Performed under pressure

Example: “Last tournament I came back from 0 to 3 and stayed patient.”

These are proof statements, not motivation speeches.



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3. Visualize

 The Science

The brain does not fully differentiate between imagined and real performance. Visualization activates motor cortex, sensory areas, and emotional circuits. It primes execution pathways before action.

 What To Do

Close your eyes for 60 to 90 seconds.

See yourself:


- Entering the environment calmly
- Executing one key skill smoothly
- Finishing strong

Keep it present tense and positive.

4. Box Breathing

 The Science


Box breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system and reduces sympathetic overdrive. It lowers heart rate and quiets mental noise.

 What To Do

For 2 minutes:

Inhale 4 seconds

Hold 4 seconds



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Exhale 4 seconds

Hold 4 seconds

Let your shoulders soften. Let your jaw unclench. Allow your body to settle.

5. Short Meditation

 The Science

Meditation strengthens attention networks and increases gray matter in areas responsible for focus and emotional regulation . It trains your ability to bring the mind back when distracted.

 What To Do

Close your eyes.

Follow your natural breathing.

If thoughts arise, gently return to the breath.

Even 2 minutes builds internal control before external chaos.

6. Music


 The Science

Music influences emotional arousal, rhythm, and dopamine release. It can elevate energy or stabilize mood depending on the track.

 What To Do

Choose music intentionally:

- Energizing if you feel flat



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- Grounding if you feel overstimulated

Turn it off before entering the final performance space. Let the state carry forward without depending on the sound.

7. Personal Ritual

The Science

Rituals create predictability. Predictability reduces uncertainty. The brain interprets familiar sequences as safety signals, lowering anxiety.

Elite athletes often repeat the same warm up order, tap their shoes, adjust their wristband, or follow a consistent sequence.


What To Do

Create a small repeatable action.

Example:

- Tie laces the same way
- Say a specific prayer or mantra
- Touch your equipment in a specific way
- Take one deep breath and look up

Consistency builds psychological safety.



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8. Affirmations

The Science

Affirmations act as attentional filters. They guide what the brain searches for. When believable, they strengthen neural pathways associated with identity and confidence.

The key is credibility. Not exaggeration.

What To Do

Choose one belief statement and one focus cue.


Belief examples:

- “I trust my training.”
- “I am prepared.”
- “I am strong.”

Focus cue examples:

- “Strong start.”
- “See the ball.”
- “One point at a time.”

Say them slowly. Once or twice. With intention.



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Final Reminder

Confidence is not noise.

It is regulated clarity.

Before high pressure moments, you are not trying to become someone new.

You are reminding your brain of what is already true.

You have trained.

You have adapted.

You have grown.

Now allow your preparation to express itself.

All the best!