

OULTC resources on visualisation, warm ups and pre match preparation, and mental skills

Novak's tips on visualisation: Serve to Win (2013)

"Visualisation is a big part of everybody's life, not just athletes. I strongly believe in visualization. I believe that there is a law of attraction: You get the things that you produce in your thoughts. Life just works that way"

What this means on court when put into practice:

"I acknowledge the negative thoughts and let them slide by, focusing on the moment"

- What do you need to do to create or re-create your best and most positive tennis experiences in the mind?
- Can you start to use visualisation routines as part of your pre-performance and immediately before performance?

How to Practice Visualization: Choose a quiet space and sit comfortably...

- Close your eyes and bring the attention of your mind to your breath
- Inhale and exhale, slowly, naturally from your diaphragm, as if you had an inflatable balloon under your lungs and on your stomach
- Occasionally, when you inhale, hold the air, just for a few moments, and observe how your mind becomes calmer
- Exhale slowly and deeply, always focusing on your breath, on the gentle movement of your breath
- You will notice how bringing attention to your breath will also bring your mind, soul and body in alignment; they will become one and you will start experiencing the oneness of your own essence
- Now let go of your body and time completely. Allow yourself to fall deeper and deeper into relaxation
- When you are in state of profound relaxation, recall a time when you performed perfectly. Bring the vividness of that memory to your mind
- See, hear, feel that fulfilling experience. Bring that memory alive in the now. Enjoy it, fully
- Abandon yourself in the images, sounds and feelings you have
- Now think of a word, a phrase, or a symbol that captures that experience of perfect performance...
- Once that word, phrase or symbol is presented to your mind, thank your unconscious for suggesting that word, phrase or symbol to you...
- And now think of a future event when you will need to accomplish a goal, when you'll need to excel...
- Experience that future event as if it is happening right now, in the present...
- Experience your performance now endowed with the energy and the power that the chosen word, phrase or symbol are providing to you...
- Make the visualization as rich as possible in every detail (shapes, colours, environment, sounds, etc.)
- Don't worry if your mind at times begins to wonder. Without applying effort, gently bring the focus back to your visualization as you continue to focus on your breath.... Inhale and exhale...
- Repeat the visualization several times. When you feel the moment is right, choose what insights, understandings, images, sounds and experiences you would like to bring back from your deep relaxation and visualization...

- Then come slowly back...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0-UQV4ifTw> guided tennis meditation April 2013

<https://www.tennismentalskills.com/> 5-minute guided Tennis meditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzWBugOXtG8>

How to deal with fear, nerves and anger (August 2014)

NLD method

N = notice (what you are really going through/ when do you feel it/ when that happens)

L = look at your body (as almost every time you are feeling something, your body will do something, e.g. fast heartbeat, sweating, shaking in the arms etc.)

D = describe (notice that you are feeling something, look at what that does and then describe it as though it is a materialistic thing, e.g. that's "x", that's "y", and that's the outcome)

Basic stretching exercises:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l07QQdxtQfE> (January 2019)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjsuTlqd2Gw&t=26s> (December 2018)

- **NB:** start as lightly as possible and with gradual increase in intensity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wy-CRkde_IA Novak warming up BNP Paribas Open 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVPP1yJ40VE> Novak balance workout Rolex Paris Masters 2018

How to prepare for a Tennis match:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tVUZcDC_Ss 1-2-1 coached training session with a variety of drills (December 2018)

<http://www.playerdevelopment.usta.com/About-USTA/Player-Development/pre-match-tips-preparing-like-a-champion/> May 2015)

Preparing to play a tennis match with positive energy is similar to entering the motorway when driving. You don't want to enter the at 30 mph; you may get never get into the first lane. Instead, if the speed limit is 70 mph, accelerate to 55-60 mph as you enter the junction

As you prepare for a match, use the time to mentally and physically get close to match speed with your shots, movement and mind. This will help you get off to a fast start and compete with your game plan immediately

Prepare your game to compete:

1. Practice the way you want to play. This includes practicing between-points routines
2. Have your bag/equipment ready – racquets strung and gripped, healthy snacks, lots of water, sports drink if needed, extra clothes, extra pair of shoes, towel, hat, sunscreen, etc

Prepare your body to compete

1. Rest: Follow a consistent schedule of at least eight consecutive hours
2. Wake up: Rise a minimum of two hours before the match. The optimal wake-up time is three before the start of a match to be alert at match time
3. Breakfast: Choose juices, fruits, yogurts with cereals, toast, etc. (try to avoid cheeses, butter, pastries)
4. Hydration: Drink 1.5 litres of water with electrolytes two hours before the match begins and continue to drink during the match: water is the new gold!
5. Training before the match:
 - Physical warm up: 15 minutes
 - Technical warm up “on court” 30-45 minutes, including specific plays/situations in preparation for opponent. For example, being aggressive on second serve returns, midcourt forehands, etc.

Prepare your mind to compete

1. Choose up to three “how to play the game” goals to focus on before and during the match. These are usually things you have been working in practice; focus on tactical and competitive goals such as following your routine, being physical and committed to running for every ball, dictating with your forehand, etc.
2. Rest seated alone in a quiet and cool place the final 15-30 minutes prior to your match (without talking to other players), listen to music or read (no blue screen distractions, phones, computers, etc. as these things require mental energy and can make you mentally tired prior to the match)
3. Visualize mentally the match that you will play (and be prepared for positive outcomes as well as adverse situations)

Prepare to be at match speed

1. Physical activation: Once you have been assigned a court, do three to five minutes of physical activation before going out to the match (i.e. sprints, quick feet drills, reaction drills, shadows with racquet, etc.).
2. Mental activation: Focus on your process goals and become excited about the match
3. Warm-up with opponent: Move and hit the ball vigorously. Feel like you have started the match

Examples

Professional tennis players are professional off the court; they prepare their game, body and mind to be at their best. Check out our tips from the pros to be professional in your preparation.

Professionalism is one of the most important values of a great tennis player. An important component of it is being prepared for matches, physically and mentally. Take our 90-day challenge. Review our best methods for preparing for matches. Choose three things you will do for the next 90 days and make it a habit!

Three Essential Ways to Prepare for Matches Like the Pros

1. Be vigorous in the warm-up. Move your feet and hit out on the ball. Hit your shots big and miss, and then bring it back in to the court. You want to know what you can do with your shots on that day
2. Set three process or “how to play the game” goals for your match. Then visualize how you will play your match for 5-10 minutes with or without music. That way you will be focused on playing the way you have practiced, which takes the pressure off of focusing on winning and losing
3. Twenty to 30 minutes before your match, get focused by putting away your phone and stop socializing with friends and family. Do dynamic movements to get the body and mind warmed up

<https://www.tecnifibre.com/tecnimag/tennis-progression/how-prepare-tennis-match>
(May 2017) Jaques Hervet

My mental battery:

Make a connection with the voice inside you that tells you if you will be able to manage the situation mentally or not, based on your personality type (pessimistic or optimistic). Then, get in the right state of mind. Push yourself with motivating words. Choose the right thoughts, such as: “I trust my speed of footwork”, “I can deliver my best tennis under pressure against my opponent”, or “the main thing is to be focused in the present”

Remember to think only of what you want to happen, rather than fearing what could happen

My emotional battery:

Embrace every feeling that occurs. Accept negative emotions... use the tension to put you in performance mode, even if it challenges feelings of anxiety and fear

If needed, activate your emotional valve. If the emotion is invading or paralyzing you, remember to free yourself of the negativity. This activity allows you to drain the emotional pressure in one moment. It could be a word, a sound, or an action/ gesture/ motion that helps you... No matter what, there should be a feeling of release

If you want to remain in total control of your emotions, you have to enjoy the game. Your self-awareness must be precise on the court. Ask yourself, what am I looking for? The pleasure from the game? The challenge? The victory? Showing off what I can do? Helping

my teammates in team competition? Whatever it is, without positive energy while playing, there will be no results

Lastly, remember to develop rituals at the start. Rituals are a routine that allows you to calm the emotional fire by finding security and therefore avoid losing control of your emotions

My physical battery:

More than the muscles' actions, there is an inside spirit that eases you

<https://www.tennismindgame.com/mental-preparation.html>

1. Remind yourself of the qualities you have:

A simple thought to start this process is: "Here's what I am good at: ..." Go through the physical, mental, technical and tactical parts of the game and look for areas where you're good

This is not the time to be critical and harsh with yourself. This is the time to build your confidence, so just give yourself some extra points for having extra stamina or great ability to pick up low balls, being able to get an extra ball back, having good reactions at the net or anything else. These are positive examples

2. Focus on playing your best solid tennis regardless of how your opponent plays and remember how your typical game looks:

It often happens that the opponent can force their type of game and you simply forget your preferred way of playing tennis. You just react instead of trying to implement your own game.

Do a brief overview of how you want the majority of points to be played: long or shorter points; keeping the opponent behind the baseline; keeping the ball on their weaker side; using lots of topspin, or even trying a serve and sneak in as a surprise tactic to break up a pattern etc.

3. If you know your opponent, determine their weaknesses and your game plan:

This is the smaller part of your game, because it might take you out of your zone and preferred game play. Still, find your opponent's weak points (weak backhand, doesn't move well forward and backward, has poor volleys, etc.) and decide how you're going to exploit them (control points with my forehand, drop shots and lobs, etc.).

The key is to visualise these plays and memorise them so that they happen automatically in the match when the situation is right.

This is what you should do before each match, practice in the days before as well as an hour or so before the match