

# Concentration

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Concentration can be defined as being aware of only the present and to focus solely on the task at hand without being distracted. Concentration is very important fundamental and mental skill, which must be learned by all athletes if they want to perform to their potential. This is a difficult skill to learn and must be consistently practiced.

When performing, a player must remember to center his focus of concentration on only positive mental thoughts about how he wants to perform. Our brain works like a computer controlling the actions of the body. A computer will only respond according to the input it receives. A player should always feed his mind positive messages about how he wants to perform (i.e., I will field the ball clearly). He should not feed his mind negative messages about how he does not want to perform (i.e., I hope I don't make an error). If players feed themselves positive pictures, then their body will learn to respond accordingly. However, if they feed themselves negative pictures and thoughts their body will act accordingly.

Once a player's brain has been programmed with positive mental pictures, his next step is to find a focus point as the center of concentration. Remember concentration is being aware of only the present, not the future or past. The focus point should be an objective in the field of play that is the target for the skill to be performed. Some examples would be: The release point of the pitcher; the catcher's mitt; as a fielder the batter; the pitcher; etc.

A player's complete mental attention should have a positive mental picture in his mind that he will successfully perform the skill. He also must have a positive feeling of confidence in his potential and ability to successfully accomplish the intended task. If any negative feelings or thoughts enter his mind while performing- even for a split second- the player has broken his concentration and his performance may be affected.

When a player's main goal in competition is to win, his focus of concentration becomes distorted. Since winning becomes his main concern, his mind naturally thinks about winning or losing instead of his performance. This is the reason many athletes never reach their potential. While playing, they are thinking about the future of winning or losing instead of focusing their concentration on their present performance and playing to their potential. Winning is secondary, playing to one's potential is the main goal and if that is accomplished the winning will take care of itself.

If your players have total concentration while performing, they will not be influenced by anybody, will not have any sense of time, will not feel any emotion about their performance since they will be experiencing total concentration with what they are doing. Their goal will be to have the same feelings after each performance whether you are successful or make human physical errors and whether they win or lose. Remember this is because your main goal is performing to your potential; the winning will take care of itself.

Complete concentration means no negative pictures of thoughts about not successfully performing the skill. No athlete who has learned the skill of concentration will let himself become fearful of the possibility that he will not perform successfully. Fear will never enter the brain of concentrating performer. When a performer does allow fear to enter and control his mind, he usually begins to choke. Choking means that a player becomes afraid that he will not perform successful. If an athlete can perform great in practice, there is no reason he should not be able to do the same in a game. The key is learning to relax and control his fear when performing in a competitive situation.

A consistent performer is a player who has learned to relax and to control his mental thought process to only let positive mental pictures of his performance focus in his mind. He has complete confidence in his ability to successfully perform to his potential and he lets his mind take over and control the actions of his body. There is no need to be afraid. Teach our players to concentrate and they will learn to consistently perform to their potential.