

Daydream Your Way to Higher Archery Scores

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Aida Roman, Ki Bo Bae and Mariana Avitia all focused on mental training before the London 2012 Olympic Games, resulting in improved archery scores.

Imagining yourself succeeding with higher archery scores is often called “imagery” or “visualization,” but we prefer the term “mental practice.” This skill creates or re-creates events in your mind to help you prepare for future performances. We consider it mental practice because the skill involves more than just picturing a situation. You want to create information from all your senses.

See ... your hand holding your bow, competitors around you, bright sunlight in your eyes, and targets at specific distances.

Smell ... arrow lubricant, freshly cut grass, and a dusty archery range.

Hear ... bows being shot, people talking around you, arrows hitting targets, and the sound system's buzzing and whistling.

Feel ... the sun on your face, ground beneath your feet, and wind cooling your skin.

Imagine ... the gentle buzz of excitement, your determined concentration while aiming, and the excitement over a good group of arrows.



Olympic medalist Jake Kaminski is well known for his pre-tournament stretchband work. Here, he practices with a Flexor archery set, designed to help him with balance and stability.

Make these mental pictures as detailed as possible. That takes time and effort, but it's essential to mental practice. Once you've built that world inside your head, run through your shot routine. Don't just focus on how your body feels as you shoot. Tap into your emotions. Ideally, create these sensations while standing and move your body as if you're shooting. If that's not possible, mentally practice while seated or lying down so you can do it whenever you have a few minutes.

Below are three drills to try, but remember: You're limited only by your imagination.

Get more from your stretch band workout

Why work with a stretch band? Using rubber tubing (similar to what is used in physical therapy) to mimic your shot, you can improve your technique and help you recover from an injury. They also provide additional "shooting" when you're tired, the range is closed, or you're traveling and can't shoot.

By combining your stretch-band workout with mental practice, you can take archery to the next level. For instance, you can picture a practice session or a competition round. Practice shots should be as slow and deliberate as they would be in a competition.



One of the venues archers will be visualizing: the finals setup for the 2015 World Championships in Copenhagen.

Preparing for specific events

If a tournament is approaching, focus your mental practice on preparing for that event. The goal is not so much to focus on improving your archery scores at the event, as it is to immerse yourself in what the day might be like and imagine yourself being successful. Use pictures of the location and weather reports to help train your mind for possible challenges. Picture yourself in all possible weather conditions and all levels of emotion you experience while shooting your best. Many Olympians use pictures of Olympic venues to prepare for the event's extreme pressures.

Overcoming past setbacks

All archers remember situations they wish they had handled differently. Perhaps a competitor said something that upset you, or maybe the sight of your name on the leader board threw you off balance. Did shooting against a particular opponent rattle you? Did one bad arrow hurt your confidence? Or do you dislike rain, wind or other weather? For mental practice, try to relive the event and re-create all the emotions you felt at the time. Handle them exactly

how you would like to handle them in the future. If the situation occurs again, you'll be better prepared to handle it differently.