Psychological skills

C.5 goals, psychological skills and programme evaluation

Results and explanations

A dated result does not isolate its psychological cause.

- Phelps: Beijing 2008, 200 m butterfly, 1:52.03.
- Fitness, technique, experience and preparation can contribute.
- Use suitable comparisons before assigning a causal explanation.

Skills and techniques

> A skill is the quality; a technique is a method.

- Confidence and **concentration** are skills.
- A goal or relevant **self-talk** cue is a technique.
- Education $\rightarrow$ acquisition $\rightarrow$ practice and review.

A performance profile

Quality	Ideal / current / gap
Concentration	9 / 5 / 4
Confidence	8 / 4 / 4
Motivation	8 / 7 / 1

Choose a useful outcome

> A smaller reported gap does not by itself prove a skill improved.

- Discuss task importance, wishes and available resources.
- Use comparable performance and experience measures.
- One classroom profile does not diagnose a condition.

Does PST cause the change?

Repeated baseline and staggered starts strengthen inference, with limits.

- Record trends, variability and implementation.
- Training, expectancy and changed scoring may contribute.
- Compare suitable conditions and follow up.

Three types of goal

Process Technique or strategy	Relax shoulders
Performance Personal standard	1500 m under 4:20
Outcome Result against others	Win the final

Different targets; none guarantees control or benefit.

> Classify the target; no type guarantees full control.

Attention and motivation

> The same target need not prompt the same response.

- Goals may direct attention, effort, persistence and strategy.
- Fear of failure or too many cues may hinder engagement.
- Discuss achievement motivation and the actual situation.

SMART is a checklist

> A number and deadline do not establish feasibility.

- Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.
- Agree resources, feedback and review with the athlete.
- Adjust when evidence or circumstances change.

A swimming plan

1. **Proposed.** 68.0 to 66.0 s in eight weeks
2. **Intervals.** Four two-week intervals: $2.0 / 4 = 0.5$ s
3. **Targets.** 67.5, 67.0, 66.5, 66.0 s

Decision

Invented planning arithmetic; progress need not be linear.

A running plan

1. **Proposed.** 58.0 to 56.0 s in ten weeks
2. **Intervals.** Five checks: $2.0 / 5 = 0.4$ s per interval
3. **Relative.** $2 / 58 \times 100 = 3.448\ldots$ % time reduction

Decision

58.0 s is the reference; this is not a speed percentage.

Percentage points and relative change

1. **Proposed.** Free-throw success: 60% to 70%
2. **Points.** $70 - 60 = 10$ percentage points
3. **Relative.** $10 \,/\, 60 \times 100 = 16.666\ldots$ % increase

Decision

Compare like tasks, scoring and sufficient attempts.

AHL: The goal-setting paradox

> A higher achievement may bring less satisfaction than an easier one.

- Post-success deflation is a proposed explanation, not inevitable.
- Recognise achievement and review the meaning of the next target.
- A medal alone does not reveal someone's experience.

AHL: Adjustment is part of the plan

> Revise, replace or disengage from an unsuitable goal for a reason.

- Changed health, resources or priorities may alter feasibility.
- Consider a participation or learning goal when appropriate.
- Adjustment need not mean weak commitment.

AHL: Alternatives to a threshold

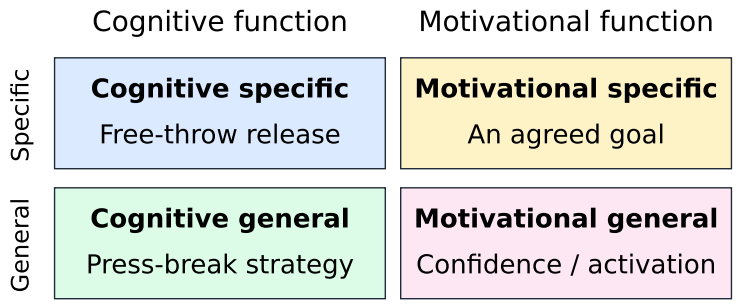
Goal form	**Example**
Specific	Agree a feasible measured target
Do your best	Encourage effort without a fixed threshold
Open	Explore how many accurate passes are comfortable

AHL: What imagery recreates

> Experience can be represented without the corresponding actual perception.

- Combine relevant sensory information and emotion.
- First-person and third-person describe perspective.
- Kinaesthetic information concerns movement sensation.

AHL: Paivio's framework



Purpose differs from first-person or third-person view.

Function differs from perspective.

AHL: PETTLEP, part one

Feature	Swimming example
Physical	Relevant posture and sensations
Environment	Relevant pool cues
Task	The swimmer's own technique
Timing	Suitable execution rhythm

AHL: PETTLEP, part two

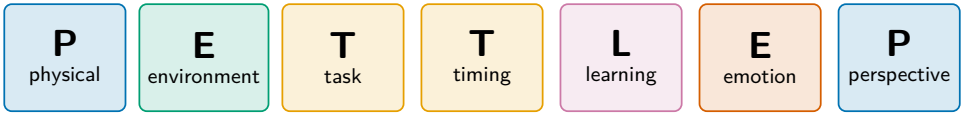
Feature	Swimming example
Learning	Update as technique changes
Emotion	Relevant experience without imposed distress
Perspective	Choose and evaluate a useful view

AHL: Proposed mechanisms

> A plausible explanation is not proof of performance benefit.

- Motor activation: small signals alone do not prove skill improvement.
- Symbolic learning: rehearsal of movement information and sequences.
- Equalise physical practice in a fair added-imagery comparison.

PETTLEP imagery



make imagery functionally similar to the real performance; a planning framework, not a fixed dose

> Make **imagery** as close to the real performance as possible

Why imagery might work

psychoneuromuscular
imagined action links to small motor activation

symbolic learning
rehearses movement information and sequence

bioinformational
scene information plus response information

proposed explanations with different predictions;
a fair test equalises physical practice across conditions

> Bioinformational: rehearsing responses as well as stimuli

Self-talk with a purpose

Choose a manageable cue and evaluate its use.

- Instructional: a relevant technical or attentional action.
- Motivational: encouragement or effort.
- Athletes in any sport may need either function.

An accurate reframe

> One missed penalty does not determine the next action.

- Notice the thought and redirect to an agreed cue.
- Do not invent an excuse or prescribe painful triggers.
- A thought can recur without meaning the athlete failed.

Regulation is context dependent

> A classroom category does not prescribe clinical treatment.

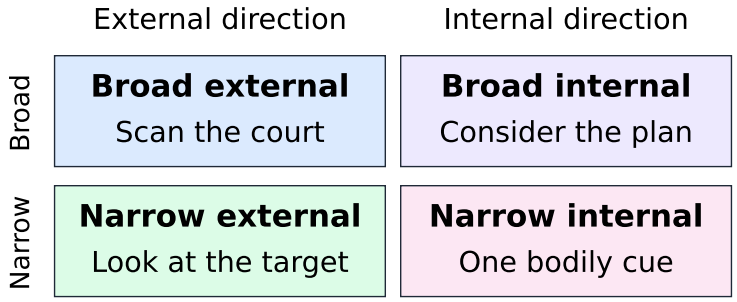
- Cognitive and bodily experiences interact.
- Use suitable familiar voluntary methods; avoid forced breathing.
- A changed pulse alone does not prove better performance.

Psych-up without a fixed optimum

> More activation is not automatically better.

- Consider recovery, task, experience and actual demands.
- Familiar music, ordinary warm-up or a cue may suit some athletes.
- Do not prescribe rapid short breaths or infer an optimum from a sport label.

Attention changes with the task



Shift attention with the task; these are examples.

These are example attentional states, not fixed athlete types.

A flexible routine

A routine gives attention a useful sequence; it does not guarantee a score.

- Choose task-relevant steps and practise them.
- Adapt to interruptions, rules and safety.
- An exact ritual is not required for success.

One miss does not diagnose choking

Distraction and excessive monitoring are proposed explanations.

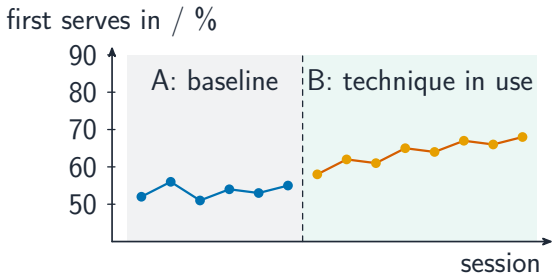
- Ordinary variability, fatigue, technique and injury also matter.
- Evaluate process cues or routines as possible supports.
- Avoid guaranteed prevention claims.

Evaluate and follow up

> A useful programme must also be feasible and acceptable.

- Agree the intended outcome and protect voluntary participation.
- Measure repeatedly and record adherence and other training.
- Use comparison and follow-up to examine alternatives.

A single-case A–B design



judge the change against baseline trend and spread; training, expectancy and maturation still compete

A stable baseline makes the change more convincing

Exam tips

> Classify, calculate and evaluate the actual claim.

- State goal reference, conditions and limits of control.
- Distinguish percentage points from relative change.
- Separate a framework, an observed change and a causal explanation.

Check yourself

Try these

Classify a placing, personal time and movement cue.

Explain why a largest profile gap is not automatically the priority.

Evaluate a routine using repeated comparable measurements.