

PSYCHOLOGICAL Periodization (PSY-P)



PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGY

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SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

PSYCHOLOGICAL Periodization (PSY-P) follows the same process as physical periodization because the demands you put on your mind or at least as important as the demands you put on your body. Psy-P is about developing a plan across a pre-determined cycle, such as a season or a year, so you can gain confidence and control over when and how to be your best.

This isn't just about fixing a part of your game. It's about removing barriers to your optimal performance, many of which are mental. It's about building entirely new strengths and habits that stay with you forever – ones you can use throughout your life and career.

There are 4 large areas of athletic development – each are connected and overlap:

technical / tactical / physical / mental

Q. how important is it to be physically fit for competition? What % of your season are you training your physical fitness?

Q. So then, how important is it to be mentally fit for competition? What % of your season are you training your mental fitness?

Psychological Periodization involves a lengthy and connected process:

- Starting early or in **Pre-Season**
- Identifying the **Time-Period**
- Being **Proactive**
- Creating a **Plan**
- **Preparing to Peak**
- **Preserving** yourself for competition by tapering
- Having one or more **Peak Phases**
- Ensuring you have “**Post-Peak**” reflection and learning

Then, the coach and athlete or team can tweak and repeat the cycles as necessary based on the number of peak phases required in a season or time period.

Overleaf, we will review the five overall phases of PSY-P.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERIODIZATION (PSY-P) PHASES:

**DETERMINED BY THE OVERALL SEASON’S TIMEFRAME &
COMPETITION DATES**

The FIVE overall phases outlined below are important to follow in the build up to, and directly following, competition.

I. PRE-SEASON PHASE: Profiling, planning, & committing

II. Pre-Competition: PREPARING FOR PEAK phase

III. Preserving yourself for competition: The SHORT TAPERING phase

IV: PEAKING FOR COMPETITION: This is what you’ve been waiting for!

V. ENSURING YOU HAVE A “POST-PEAK” PHASE: To review your performance(s) & to celebrate the success markers

Given there may be numerous competitions to peak for throughout the year, these phases can be shorter or longer depending on the number of competitive phases. Also, in the case of back-to-back tournaments, logic dictates when you would simply remain in a “peak” phase of competition with short taper in between if time allows. Also, every athlete varies in their tolerance of practice versus competition, of learning versus doing, and so on. To be a truly effective program, coach, and athlete, all plans must be individually determined.

I. PRE-SEASON PHASE: PROFILING, PLANNING, & COMMITTING

Build an awareness of your athletic profile – understand and categorize your current strengths and weaknesses.

- Which mental areas are proving to be the biggest obstacles to individual or team growth?
- Make your individual or team commitments
- Focus is entirely on the process, so judgment of progress is based on internal and targeted work, not at all about outcomes
- Practice situations are largely “closed”, meaning, you can direct your attention entirely on one concept, in isolation, without any pressure
- Ensure there is minimal external pressure or comparison
- Use your defined schedule to set time periods for areas of growth
- Build and carry out your plan

Here are many different mental skills and strengths you may find it important to work on in pre-season (NOTE: these are identified by the US Olympic Committee as “Core Mental Skills”) :

PRE-SEASON PHASE

1. Develop your athletic identity & values
2. Develop your team's identity & values
3. Develop your individual athletic profile of current strengths and weaknesses
4. Finding and developing an internal drive
5. Making and committing to your workplan of identified goals
6. Understanding the “snakes and ladders” of mental training and performance

PRE-SEASON Skills That Can be Identified for Development

1. Understanding and building your Routines: Patterns of Body Language
2. Understanding and building your Routines: Patterns of Self-Talk
3. Self-Talk Tools:
 - a. Specific in-game situations
 - b. Triggers to activate positive routines
 - c. Triggers to prevent negative routines
4. Body & Emotion Control Tools:
 - a. Breathing to reduce too much general body and mind anxiety
 - b. Breathing to focus on a specific body part
 - c. Using physical activation to build and increase energy
5. Visualization as a form of active rehearsal
 - a. Learning new concepts
 - b. Building confidence pre-tournament
 - c. Self-coaching during a game

II. PRE-COMPETITION: PREPARING TO PEAK PHASE

The length of this phase heavily relies on your defined schedule – so it fits in after your pre-season and before a short “tapering” period (no. III next,). If you have adopted your new concepts in a no- to low-pressure environment, here is your time to put new concepts under some pressure to make sure they can first “work”, followed by testing their ability to then “adapt” to more open situations.

Here are different ways you can put your new skills under pressure in pre-season:

PREPARING TO PEAK

1. Testing your Routines: Patterns of Body Language
2. Testing your Routines: Patterns of Self-Talk
3. Testing your Self-Talk Tools:
 - Specific in-game situations
 - Triggers to activate positive routines
 - Triggers to prevent negative routines
4. Testing your Body & Emotion Control Tools:
 - Breathing to reduce too much general body and mind anxiety
 - Breathing to focus on a specific body part
 - Using physical activation to build and increase energy
5. Becoming comfortable with visualization as a form of active rehearsal
 - Test new concepts
 - Build confidence pre-tournament
 - Self-coach during a game

III. PRESERVING YOURSELF FOR COMPETITION: THE SHORT TAPERING PHASE

It's crucial you build in a short tapering phase in the week immediately before the competition to “preserve yourself to peak” – both physically and mentally. This is about:

- Avoiding new concepts
- Rehearsing learned concepts and routines
- Using confidence and success patterns in regular visualization, and
- Keeping things in your life as “light” as possible

Here are the different ways you can use visualization and rehearse routines:

SHORT TAPERING PHASE

1. Review commitments made in the pre-season
2.
 - Rehearse new concepts in the present and being flawless
 - Pair visualizing with positive reinforcement self-talk as needed
 - See yourself successfully using self-coaching during a game
3. Take “walking recaps” to relax, think, & reinforce
4. Use focused breathing as a form of meditation to quiet your mind and stay present

IV. PEAKING FOR COMPETITION: THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

You didn't go through all that preparation for nothing ! Now is your time to put all that learning to the test. Your opponents are crucial allies in this process, throwing new situations and challenges at your new skills and routines, making skills and routines durable and adaptable. You quite literally NEED your opponent to improve and to peak! Psychological peaking is about your ability to do the following:

PEAKING PHASE

1. Hold true to your commitments, your newly adopted skills and routines. They are being tested for weaknesses BUT they are becoming automatic.
2. Gauge your actual performance, including the outcomes, of your performance. That said, many athletes make quick momentary switches into "fixing" a process, a routine in-game as needed.
3. Switch quickly to address a process or routine in a "down" moment of competition, then put it behind you and focus on the moment in front of you
4. Utilize your skills to help you be in the right physical and mental state – breathing to loosen the body and lower the heart rate, using self-talk routines to stay confident and relaxed, using body activation techniques to pick up your energy and show strength to your opponent
5. On the rare occasion that you find yourself in a state of flow, enjoy it! This happens rarely, where you find everything effortless and even thoughtless... and you simply can't lose ! If you figure that one out, write a book and I'll be your first customer and student !

V. ENSURING YOU HAVE A "POST-PEAK" PHASE TO REVIEW YOUR PERFORMANCE(S) & TO CELEBRATE THE SUCCESS MARKERS

This is the least used phase in psychological periodization directly following competition. You just had a test – it was a competition. You got your outcome "grade" of a victory, loss, or tie. You also know all the key markers you were trying to hit during competition.

POST- PEAK PHASE

1. Drill down on them all and assess your performance markers COMPREHENSIVELY
2. The score, the wins, the losses, these provide some of the learnings but they are far from being able to provide all the learnings
3. Go back to your plan, break your game down to its component parts from your plan
4. Reflect on how each marker delivered, especially under pressure
5. Write it all down. Walk away, then come back and review it. You'll be astounded how much MORE there is to be learned from your comprehensive performance review using all your markers – so CELEBRATE
6. Your plan for the next set of periodization phases is now pretty much staring you in the face, so get to work on drafting it while it's all fresh in your mind and body

PERIODIZATION READING & RESOURCES

<https://www.apa.org/education-career/guide/subfields/performance>

- introduces the term performance psychology

<https://athleticperformanceacademy.co.uk/periodisation-for-tennis/>

- these are actually parts 1-4 with lots of detail on physical periodization for tennis

Full article: The what, why, and how of goal setting: A review of the goal-setting process in applied sport psychology practice

- Great lit review on goals, including multiple Weinberg citations

<https://www.usopc.org/mental-performance>

- Team USA Olympics – lots of sections and links

<https://www.sportpsych.org/nine-mental-skills-overview>

- Ohio Ctr for Sport Psych – good pyramid of easy to hard

<https://www.drpaulmccarthy.com/post/how-to-master-psychological-skills-a-step-by-step-guide-for-athletes-with-training-plan>

- A sports psychologist – pretty good layout – great STEP BY STEP process