

Learning Guide #7

For Watching the Olympic Games/Sporting Events with Children

Using Five Minutes Before Your Performance

Watching the Olympic Games or a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) has developed a series of learning guides for adults and children to use while watching sports on television or in person to promote healthy dialogue. This guide suggests certain observations and presents several questions to discuss together. The learning guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic.

Observation and discussion questions: Using Five Minutes Before Your Performance

While you watch the Olympic Games or a sports event:

- Observe athletes immediately prior to performing their events.
- What do these athletes do immediately before competition?
- Do some athletes appear to have a routine (structured sequence of behaviors and thoughts) that they go through?
- What do you think the athlete is thinking about right now before he or she performs?
- Are there any differences between the athletes that use routines and the athletes who do not? For example, does either athlete look more relaxed, confident, happy or panicked, rushed, confused, or worried?
- What do you do immediately before performing a skill?
- How might being at the Olympic Games (or playing an important game) change your thoughts and behaviors immediately before performing a skill? Might this change affect your performance? How can you remain steady and focused before a big game?
- How might using a routine help you to stay focused, relaxed, and confident going into your performance?

Lesson Conclusion

Successful athletes are appropriately energized, confident, and focused immediately prior to performing. Rather than allowing their surroundings, such as being at the Olympic Games, to affect how they prepare, successful athletes go through the same behaviors and think the same thoughts during the five minutes before every performance. Athletes may physically walk through their performances or some aspect of their performance. For example, they may visualize executing their performances flawlessly (especially watch divers who move their arms and body as they would in the air). Some athletes will talk to themselves, saying things to stay confident or say cue words (explode, smooth and strong) that guide them through specific movements. The last five minutes prior to performing a skill can be critical for athletes in focusing their emotions and energy. Some athletes use this time to make sure they are psyched up and ready to explode while others use this time to calm themselves down. Importantly, successful athletes use this time productively to put themselves in a mindset that helps their performance.

AASP encourages adults to do their part to create a supportive youth sport environment so children will develop a lifelong interest in physical activity and sports. By teaching fundamental sporting principles, you can help children develop winning attitudes, both in sports and throughout life.

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The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, www.appliedsportpsych.org.

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