

Performance imagery

The use of visual imagery in performance not only helps your rehearsals to be more efficient but actually improves the end result (Denis, 1985). This technique involves creating a hyper-detailed rendition of the ideal performance, accounting for details such as the environment, physical sensations, thoughts and feelings. Create a picture detailed enough, and you will be able to control your body's reaction to the stress of the event, thereby delivering a superior performance.

Identify <i>State what you want to improve through imagery</i>		Inspire <i>Connect this performance to your larger goals</i>	
What am I preparing for?	How will imagery help me?	Why am I performing?	How will this performance help?
Imagine <i>Recall what happened the last time you gave a similar performance</i>		Plan <i>Work out the details of your script rehearsal strategy</i>	
What was happening that day?	What was I thinking?	Where will I rehearse?	When will I rehearse?
What was my body doing?	How did I feel?	How often will I rehearse?	

On a separate sheet of paper, write your performance imagery script in as much detail as you possibly can. Write in the second person (e.g., "you"). Below is an example to guide you.



You're waiting in the wings as you're about to go on. You hear the emcee begin to deliver the introduction that will announce your cue to take the stage. Your heart rate is slightly elevated with anticipation and you are taking long, deep breaths to still your mind. You focus your gaze on an object in the room and use it as a focal point to recall the first words of your presentation. Just then, the emcee says your name.

You widen your eyes and hold out the palms of your hands to attract the audience. You put on a great big, genuine smile and bound up the stairs to pump up your energy (but not too quickly to avoid tripping). You greet the emcee, warmly, take his microphone and turn to face the room, opening your arms wide. You are a wall of charisma; a magnetic presence that seizes the audience's attention before you even utter a word. Clearly and deliberately, with the microphone the perfect distance from your lips, you voice the opening you had just moments before prepared.

The anticipation you felt gives way to ease. Once you've spoken the opening words, the rest of your speech flows forth, with a cool, measured pace and an effective, varied inflection. You meet your audience's enthralled gaze and reflect their appreciation right back to them. You are in a dance with these people and happy to take the lead.

You reach the end of your talk, tired but invigorated, and give the audience one last smile. Satisfied, you put the microphone on its stand and bow. You love public speaking, and it shows.