

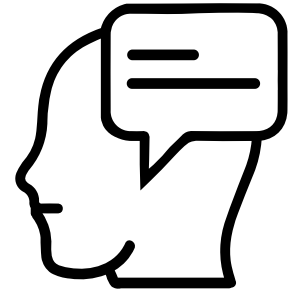


# PRODUCTIVE SELF-TALK

Being aware of and shaping self-talk helps athletes positively influence their performance. When athletes become aware of what they say to themselves out loud and/or in their head, they can recognize their self-talk early so they can change or reframe the messages.

## SELF-TALK HELPS ATHLETES:

- Improve performance <sup>1</sup>
- Learn new sport skills/tactics <sup>1</sup>
- Increase focus/concentration<sup>2</sup>
- Build confidence <sup>2</sup>
- Improve emotional regulation <sup>2</sup>
- Maximize effort <sup>2</sup>
- Perform tasks automatically <sup>2</sup>
- Execute specific skills with accuracy



## THE ROLE OF THE COACH

### CREATE SELF-TALK ROUTINES

- Work with athletes to notice their patterns of self-talk.
- Identify productive and unproductive self-talk.
- Help athletes replace unproductive self-talk with productive self-talk phrases specific to their roles (i.e., goalie) and/or specific tasks (i.e., jump ball).
- If needed, create additional productive self-talk phrases (i.e., "I got this.").
- Plan ahead for when athletes will use self-talk phrases (i.e., free throw, serve, off the block, etc.).
- Set aside time for athletes to practice their self-talk strategies.
- Check in on athletes' self-talk strategies and encourage adjustments, as needed.

### PROVIDE FEEDBACK

- Model productive self-talk in feedback.
- Frame feedback as information to guide adjustments rather than positive/negative views of performance.
- Focus on productive instructions about performance when giving feedback.
  - DON'T SAY: "That was a bad hit. Don't hit like that."
  - DO SAY: "That hit was arced. Try swinging all the way through to control the arc of the ball."

Interested in learning more? Visit [go.osu.edu/coachbeyond](http://go.osu.edu/coachbeyond) or email [coach\\_beyond@osu.edu](mailto:coach_beyond@osu.edu) for additional trainings and resources!

# TYPES OF SELF-TALK

Function	Timing	Example(s)
<b>MOTIVATIONAL SELF-TALK (ENERGY AND CONFIDENCE)</b>		
Increase energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before a competition</li> <li>• In a high-pressure moment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Talk:</b> A bowler says, "I can do this." while grabbing the bowling ball.</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> Before each competition, have the team say, "Execute," during the huddle.</p>
Maximize effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During practice</li> <li>• During a competition</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Talk:</b> A midfield soccer player says, "Sprint and counter!" whenever the soccer ball switches possession.</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> During time outs, instruct athletes to keep up effort by saying, "Continue to see the ball hit the back of the net."</p>
Build confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During practice</li> <li>• Before a competition</li> <li>• In a high-pressure moment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Talk:</b> A dancer says, "I've practiced this. I know this." before performing the routine.</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> Tell a lacrosse player, "I noticed you holding the stick vertical while cradling. That's a great way to prevent checking."</p>
Reframe negative thoughts or mistakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During practice</li> <li>• Before a competition</li> <li>• During a competition</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Talk:</b> When a basketball player misses free throw, he/she says, "Net," to focus on the next one.</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> When an athlete has unproductive thoughts, teach him/her to test T.H.E. (True? Helpful? Evidence-supported?) thought.</p>
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL SELF-TALK (TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL)</b>		
Direct attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While learning a new skill</li> <li>• During a competition</li> <li>• In a high-pressure moment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Talk:</b> A field hockey player directs her attention to receiving the ball well before passing by saying in her head, "Receive the ball."</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> Teach new water polo players to repeat, "Legs. Legs. Legs."</p>
Instruct on technique/strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While learning a new skill/tactic</li> <li>• During practice</li> <li>• During a competition</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Talk:</b> A sprinter uses three cues to change pace at various parts of a race. He/she says, "push," "heel," and "claw."</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> In teaching a volleyball player how to spike say, "I noticed you are stopping when you hit the ball. Try following through with your arms for more power. Think ARMS."</p>
Guide how to complete the skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While learning a new skill</li> <li>• During a competition</li> <li>• During practice</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Talk:</b> A golfer says, "Smoothly," while pulling back to swing or counts, "1, 2, 3," on the backswing.</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> Say, "Glide," to your swimmers while they practice the breaststroke.</p>

## References

- Hatzigeorgiadis, A., Nikos, C. F. Z., Galanis, E., & Theodorakis, Y. (2011). Self-Talk and Sports Performance: A Meta-Analysis. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(4), 348-356.
- Theodorakis, Y., Hatzigeorgiadis, A., & Chroni, S. (2008). Self-talk: It works, but how? Development and preliminary validation of the Functions of Self-Talk Questionnaire. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science*, 12, 10-30.