

# Coaching Corner



## The power of visualization

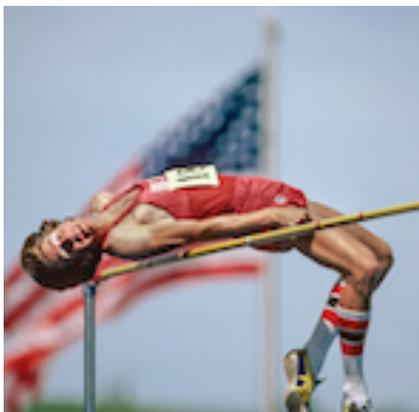
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You rehearse your speeches, right? But how do you rehearse when you're on an airplane with passengers all around you? Or at home with your teenage daughter doing homework in the next room? Maybe your next speech is before an audience of 1,000 people. How do you rehearse that? It's simple - *visualization*. What is visualization? Visualization is imagining your presentation delivery in your mind. And it's easy!

### Visualization basics

Visualization is something most of us have been doing for our entire life. Some people might just call it daydreaming. But it's creatively imagining an event and your participation in that event. If you're asleep, it's dreaming. If you're awake it's visualization. Many people find it easier to do with their eyes closed, but that's not necessary.

To visualize something, simply imagine it playing out as a scene in your mind instead of actually in physical reality.



The great Olympic high jumper Dwight Stones would visualize his perfect high jump just before he began the run for his real jump. By visualizing a perfect jump, doing a perfect

real jump was only repeating what he had just visualized. This use of visualization won Stones many championships and Olympic medals.

For a speech giver, visualization is imagining the perfect speech, word by word and gesture



by gesture, in your mind. It includes both visual images (what things look like) and auditory (what things sound like). It may even include the other senses. (Do my muscles feel relaxed?)

## What to watch

You have several options of what the visual image is in your imagining mind. One is to imagine that you are actually in the audience watching you give your speech. This can be effective in helping realize what it will look like to your audience.



Another option is to imagine seeing exactly what you will see when you give the real speech. Imagine the room that you will be in. Look around at the walls, the seats, the lectern if you will use one, and most importantly the people in the seats. Imagine the looks on their faces. Imagine what your voice sounds like.



This second option tends to be more valuable, as it rehearses the physical sensations you will experience during your live

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speech. After experiencing these many times during visualized rehearsals, the real thing will be much less threatening.

## How much to visualize

To be completely ready for your next speech, do visualized rehearsals of what happens before you stand up to speak (an association dinner?), your introduction by the event



organizer, taking your place, giving your speech, taking questions, and making your exit. Visualize the room you are in, the audience members, your breathing, your gestures, your tone of voice, your pauses, everything that makes your speech so effective.

## When to visualize

### • *During speech development*

While you are putting your speech together, visualize (imagine) what it will look and sound like to the audience to whom you will be presenting.

### • *During speech practice*

Visualization enables you to rehearse anywhere at almost any time. You don't need a

quiet room. And you can do visualized speeches many



times a day (driving to work, at lunch, on break, mowing the lawn).

• *Before you walk on stage*  
Just like Dwight Stones's high jumps, you can do a perfect visualized presentation in your mind just before you step up to give your actual speech.

## Summary

Doing 50 repetitions of a perfect speech in your mind will make giving the same perfect speech to your actual audience just like giving the 51st. People in both your visualized and real audiences will inevitably say how relaxed and polished you were. And you'll think to yourself that all you did was deliver the same speech in the same way you had visualized dozens of times before.