

VISUALIZATION 101 ~ for VOLLEYBALL

1. **Set the stage:** A great place to start using mental imagery (until you get the consistent hang of it) is on your own in a quiet setting with little to no distractions. In your bed at night after training, or the night before training is ideal. After training, or when the play/drills are fresh in your mind, is the most accurate and directly performance-related picture you need in doing skills. Experiment with different scenarios that work best for you.
2. **Start over with the basics, and start small:** Take a small skill, one that you can easily isolate, and start with that. Some athletes have trouble visualizing him/herself at first, so they watch themselves doing a skill perfectly on video or watching someone else on video. Then they try to recreate these smaller skills in your mind.
3. **Move beyond the video view:** Once you're able to visualize yourself as though you're watching yourself on video, try stepping into your own image. Doing a skill while looking through your own eyes. In order to see some of the best results with visualization, you should try to see, hear and feel the moves you're making. Start with your hands or feet. Look down to see and feel them, now close your eyes and recreate those images and feel your feet on the floor, hand holding or making contact with the ball, or tossing the ball in the air before service. How does your body feel when you reach for the ceiling, take off for a block, move laterally and fully extend for a ball?
4. **Use all your senses:** In a training or competition situation (for instance) you will encounter certain noises, spectators, different gym conditions (hot, cold, stuffy, noisy); incorporate some of these into your mental images. Your mind & body get used to all the distractions.
5. **Be consistent:** Visualization isn't a quick fix. Like any skill it needs dedication and you need to practice. Most national, professional and Olympic level athletes do at least 5-15 minutes of intense visualization a day and consistently at the start or during each training session and before competitions. That's a minimum, but it can count for hours of unsuccessful practice time if done efficiently.
6. **Be sharp & "spot on":** It's crucial that you envision yourself as strong, confident and having sharp confident technique in your mind. Images are the blueprint for your success in 'real life'. Correct any mistakes in your head and if you mess up – just fix it :)
7. **Expect results!** Be ready to see results once you start to consistently use visualization in your training repertoire. It can be done any time of day, anywhere, and you don't need gym time, coaches, or equipment. It's training.... for your brain!

