Your notes

GCSE PE: revision notes

Arousal, anxiety and stress management

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Arousal and the inverted U theory

- **Arousal** is a physical and mental (physiological and psychological) state of alertness or readiness, from deep sleep to intense excitement.
- The **inverted U theory** says performance improves as **arousal** rises, up to an optimal point, then falls if **arousal** keeps rising.
- Under-aroused performers are slow and unfocused; over-aroused performers become anxious, tense and make mistakes.

Optimal arousal depends on the skill

- **Fine skills**, such as putting in golf or archery, need low **arousal** for accuracy and control.
- **Gross skills**, such as a rugby tackle or weightlifting, need high **arousal** for power.
- Experienced performers can usually cope with higher **arousal** than beginners.

Stress management techniques

- Deep breathing: slow breaths lower heart rate and calm the performer, such as before a penalty.
- **Mental rehearsal**, visualisation and imagery: picturing performing the skill successfully, in a calm place or during the event.
- **Positive self-talk**: replacing negative thoughts with encouraging ones, such as "I've practised this".

Key terms

Arousal	A physical and mental state of alertness or readiness.

Inverted U theory	Performance improves with arousal up to an optimal point, then declines.
Optimal arousal	The level of arousal that gives the best performance.
Anxiety	A negative mental state of worry about performance.
Mental rehearsal	Picturing yourself performing a skill successfully.
Positive self-talk	Using encouraging thoughts to stay calm and confident.
Fine skill	A skill using small muscle groups and precise movements.
Gross skill	A skill using large muscle groups and powerful movements.

Your notes

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What does the inverted U theory show?
2. Which skill needs a low level of arousal?
3. Which skill needs a high level of arousal?
4. What happens to performance if a performer is over-aroused?
5. Which is a stress management technique?
6. What is mental rehearsal?
7. What is positive self-talk?
8. What is arousal?

Answers

1. Performance improves with arousal up to an optimal point, then falls
2. A golf putt
3. A rugby tackle
4. It gets worse because they become anxious and make mistakes
5. Deep breathing
6. Picturing yourself performing a skill successfully
7. Replacing negative thoughts with encouraging ones
8. A physical and mental state of alertness or readiness

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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