



Hi graduate friends,

Over the past couple of years, I've promoted visualizing things quite a lot to gain a better and deeper understanding of concepts being learned. However, there is also a wealth of literature available on the benefits of mental imagery for improving motor skills. Depending on what you are studying/working on, you may require the use of different motor skills such as surgical procedures, hand-eye coordination in the lab, musical instrument-playing or vocal performances, basketball shooting, your typing speed, your body language and public speaking during presentations, and more.

But "go visualize" (!) doesn't exactly provide enough instructions on how to do so properly. So, let's look into some suggestions from the literature. First, do the task in real life! Research shows that mental imagery of the task after you've done the physical practice at least once is more beneficial (Schuster et al., 2011). Seems obvious, right? It's hard to imagine a task accurately with all the actual details involved if you've never done it before. Second, similar to a cognitive task, it's helpful to define the task (Hall, 2002). What is it exactly that you want to improve? For example, you may want to improve your body language and word choices when you first meet someone at a conference and want to introduce yourself. Then, label it (Huberman, 2023), and use the same label for when you're doing it in real life and when you're imagining it (e.g., "introducing myself to academicians"). Third, you'll have to set aside the appropriate amount of time for it. It's easy to think that since it's all in your head, you can do it more quickly than in real life! But that's not the case unfortunately. Imagining things properly takes the same amount of time that they would take in real life. This also means the more complex the task, the more time it takes (Borst & Kosslyn, 2008). So, if you want a 20-second introduction of yourself, you need 20 seconds for each mental rehearsal of it. Fourth, keep it short and repeat it a good number of times in each session (Huberman, 2023; Schuster et al., 2011). For example, practice in your mind 3 times a week, every time for 20 iterations (something like that!). And finally, don't forget to continue practicing in real life! You absolutely need the physical practice to accompany the mental imagery for it to all become more concrete (Son et al., 2022). So, whenever there's the opportunity, do your 20 second introduction and tell people about yourself!

Hi, my name is Greek um, oh sorry! My name is Sam and I study Greek literature! Very stressed, I mean excited to meet you!



Best,



Najmeh Keyhani (she/her/hers), PhD, from your [Learning Development & Success](#) team!

Reference:

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