

# How to Prepare for a Sports Tournament

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Last Updated: May 6, 2021

The big tournament is coming up, and you want to do everything you can to bring your team to victory. Your skill alone can get you there, but thorough preparation will make your success even more likely. Don't worry if you get a little nervous, that's normal! Take a moment to relax and breathe. Then, make efforts to prepare your mind and body so that the possibility of panic is minimized. Remember, the tournament should be fun and winning is just a bonus.

## Things You'll Need

- ☐ Equipment
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Drink
- ☐ Uniform

Part  
1

## Part 1 of 3: Organizing the Weeks Before the Game



**1 Write down everything you will need.** Making lists may not seem like something that will help you win. But, think of it this way—winners make lists. Thinking of all the things you will need for game day will reduce stress so that you can keep your mind on the game. Write down the date of the tournament, equipment you will need, your meal plan, and training schedule. Free your mind so you can visualize that winning move.<sup>[1]</sup>

- Important information includes information about transportation, food, drink, and what will happen in an emergency.
- Bring a notebook with you to practice. Then you can write down important notes right away.



**2 Buy new equipment if needed.** It is a good idea to make sure that you have the equipment, uniform, and shoes needed. If you find that some of the equipment is old or missing, go ahead and buy new equipment, a water bottle, etc. This is one less thing you have to stress about as it gets closer to game day.[2]

- Check that the equipment is up to standard. There is nothing worse than turning up on game day and finding your equipment is broken.



**3 Cut back on the intensity of your training.** No, this doesn't mean to sit back with a bag of chips and your favorite show. It's important to keep your mind and body in great shape, but don't overdo it. Taper the intensity of your training about two weeks before the tournament. This reduces the chance of injury and ensures that you're well rested for the big day.[3]

- You may not have a say in how much training you do if you train with a team. In this case, cut down the training you do on your own time.



**4 Get more sleep.** It's hard to argue with the idea of getting more sleep. Try to increase the amount of sleep you get to 10 hours. Sorry, but this may mean cutting back on late night binge watching and video games. It will be worth it though. Get extra sleep and stick to that schedule so you guaranteed to be well rested when it comes to game day.[4]

- Keep a sleep diary to manage your sleep habits. There are also smartphone apps that help with this.





**5 Drink at least 1.5 liters of water a day.** Getting enough water is really important—especially for an athlete like yourself. Staying hydrated is important when you're training and sweating a lot. Try to drink 1.5 or more liters of water a day. Keep a water bottle with you at all times to make staying hydrated easy.[5]

- Mix your water with fruit to give it some taste if you're usually not a fan of drinking water.
- Sodas are a guilty pleasure, but you should stay away from them. They don't do much for hydration.



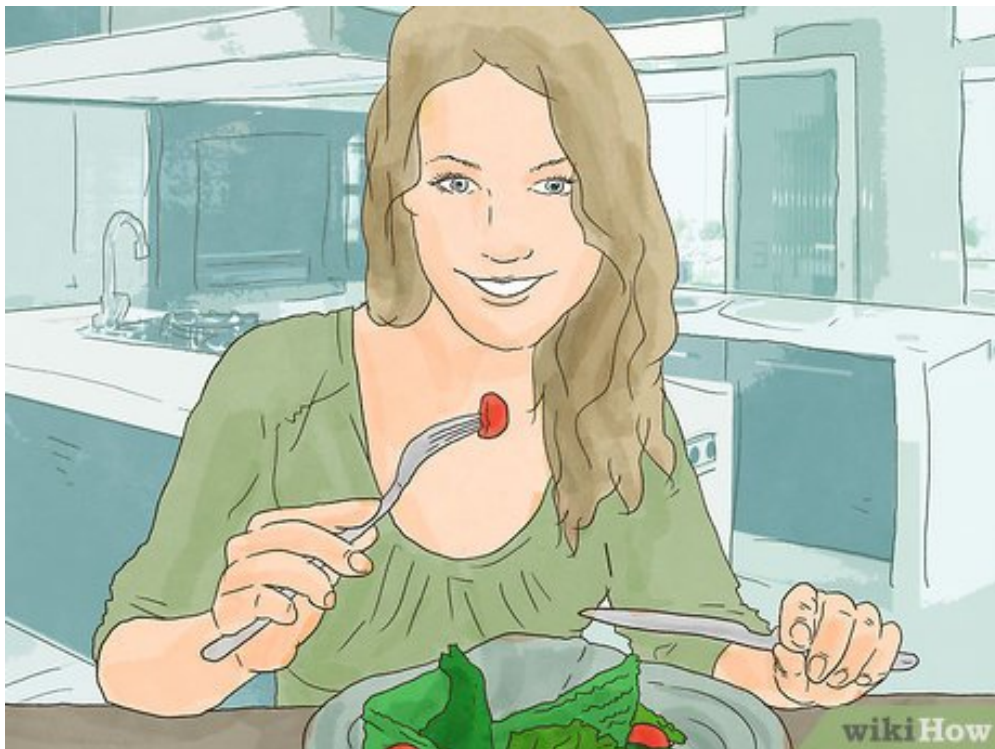
**6 Reduce meal sizes.** Do this about one week before the tournament. This doesn't mean skipping meals or hardly eating anything at all. Slightly reducing the size of your meals will prevent weight gain that may happen because of lower intensity training. Unfortunately, that means no large pizzas, cheesy bread, soda, and ice cream for dinner tonight. That can be a reward for after the tournament![6]

## Part 2 of 3: Preparing the Night Before Game Day



**1 Pack your sports bag.** Okay, now it's getting close to the big game! You may be feeling some anxiety, but you can reduce that by having everything prepared. Make a list of everything you will need. Go ahead and pack your bag. Pack your equipment, uniform, towels, and anything you will need for the tournament. Check items off of the list as you go.<sup>[7]</sup>

- Put the bag by the door or in an obvious place so that you don't walk out without it in your excitement to play the game.



**2 Eat a meal that is high in carbs.** Let your body know that it's about to do some hard work. Eat a meal that's high in carbs and protein. This will boost your glycogen levels. A great meal to have would be pasta and salmon. It's yummy and beneficial!<sup>[8]</sup>





**3 Relax early in the evening.** This is a great excuse to kick back earlier than usual. Try to have your dinner a little earlier than usual. It may be difficult, but turn off the TV, computer, and smart phone as early as possible. Use this time to meditate on the game or read a good book.<sup>[9]</sup>

- Stop drinking caffeine around 12 p.m.



**4 Visualize success.** <sup>[10]</sup> Try to avoid letting anxious, negative thoughts enter your mind. It's normal to have them, but focus on the positive. Go through the game play in your mind. Imagine the moment that you win. Play this over and over in your mind until success seems like the only reasonable outcome.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Part 3 of 3: Getting Ready on Game Day



- 1 Have a big, healthy breakfast on the day of the tournament.** A breakfast that is rich in carbs is ideal. This will give you a vital energy boost and prevent you from going hungry later in the day.<sup>[12]</sup> A donut is a carb, but you can do better than that. Avoid a lot of sugar and high fat proteins. Cereal, milk, and a banana would be a good option.<sup>[13]</sup>



**2 Pack a healthy lunch and snack.** You don't want to show up to the tournament with a growling stomach and realize you don't have anything to eat. Pack something like a sandwich and fruit for lunch. For a snack, things like nuts, bananas, granola bars, and dried fruit are ideal. Keep snacking up until right before the tournament, but don't get too full. All of this food and drink will keep you energized during the tournament, and will help you play the best you can.[14]

- Make sure to bring a refillable water bottle.



**3 Take a short nap.** Nap for about two hours before you leave for the tournament, and make sure to set an alarm. You definitely don't want to wake up and realize the tournament has already passed. A nap time of about 20 minutes would be ideal, though you can adjust the time to your liking. A short nap will give you an extra energy and performance while you play.[15]





**4 Arrive on time at the venue.** Accidents and traffic are impossible to control, but it would be a good idea to do everything you can to prevent showing up late. Map the location of the tournament before you leave. It wouldn't hurt to plan a few alternative routes as well. Leave for the tournament with so much time to spare that not even a fallen tree, traffic accident, or stop for gas could make you late.<sup>[16]</sup>



**5 Relax.** Being nervous will only hinder your performance, even if it is normal and expected. Take a moment to step aside and sit back. Reflect on all of the hard work that led you to this moment. Close your eyes and meditate. When your thoughts have steadied, get up and get prepared to win this game.<sup>[17]</sup>

- Try listening to music or breathing slowly to help you stay calm.<sup>[18]</sup>



**6 Don't get distracted.** Your mind might be racing before the game—thinking of past and future games. Resist the temptation to dwell on anything except the present moment. Don't think about what this tournament means for your future in the sport. Just think about how you can be the best you can be. It's okay if your mind drifts. Recognize you're doing it and refocus.[19]



**7 Warm up your body.** You shouldn't overdo it, but it is important that your body is prepared for what it's about to endure. Run a few laps. Stretch your muscles out. Do whatever you have to do for your particular sport. Then all that's left to do is have fun.[20]



**Expert Q&A**

#### Question

How can I mentally prepare for a sports tournament?



**Francisco Gomez**  
Fitness Coach  
Expert Answer

Just try to find a way to stay calm and relaxed so you can focus on the game. Try repeating a mantra, listening to music, or taking deep breaths to keep you calm.

Helpful 3 Not Helpful 2

#### Question

What are some ways to relax when preparing for a sports tournament?



Community Answer

Things like meditating, breathing exercises and distracting yourself the night before a big tournament can be effective so you are not staying up all night worrying about the game. Also, putting things into perspective can help, realizing that you're not always going to win even when you are optimistic and try your absolute hardest.

Helpful 3 Not Helpful 1

#### Question

What would I do if I was a hockey player?



Community Answer

Stickhandling and shooting in the basement can't hurt. Mentally review defensive breakouts, as this can often set the tone for the game. Make sure you pack an inhaler if you need one. Maximize your time on the ice; head up, and make good passes. It's hard to compete when you're looking down. Your feet will still be there! Remind yourself about the little things that decide the game. Your stick should be on the ice, ready to receive a pass or shot.

Helpful 5 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

How long should it take to prepare for a soccer tournament?



Community Answer

You really should practice a while in advance. But, to prepare you physically, it would take at least a few weeks. You need to have stamina and skills, and those don't just come naturally.

Helpful 4 Not Helpful 1

#### Question

What equipment is needed when doing soccer training?



Community Answer

Things you might need include: Shin guards, sports jersey, proper shorts/pants, knee-high socks, soccer shoes, water, a water bottle, etc.

Helpful 3 Not Helpful 0



### Question

## How do I prepare for a sports tournament when I'm nervous?



Community Answer

Try yoga. It can be used as a warm up if you stretch as well, and it calms you down. Practice regularly to make yourself feel as though as if you can win. Get to know your teammates more, too; that way you know how they play and can adjust according to that.

Helpful 2 Not Helpful 0



### Tips

- Do not panic. Buckling under the pressure before the game has even started is not going to do you or your team any good.
- Try getting a lift with a friend. You can help each other relax, and you can give encouragement to them before the game as well.
- Talk to your fellow competitors about what they do to prepare for a tournament. [21]



### Warnings

- Don't drink caffeine or alcohol before the event. They can be detrimental to your health and performance. Overly sugary drinks can do the same thing.
- Not keeping hydrated or eating on the day of the game can be bad for your health and prevent you from playing at your best.

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## About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Francisco Gomez**. Francisco Gomez is the Head Coach at the FIT Potato Gym, a training gym established in 2001 in the San Francisco Bay Area. Francisco is a former competitive runner who helps endurance athletes train for major marathons like the Boston Marathon. Francisco specializes in Injury Rehab, Flexibility, Marathon Training, and Senior Fitness. He has a B.S. in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology & Running. This article has been viewed 35,711 times.

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42 votes - 95%

Co-authors: **12**  
Updated: **May 6, 2021**  
Views: **35,711**

Categories: **Team Sports**

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