

TRANSITION BREATHING

COACHES: Proper breathing is critical to successful performance in any sport. Unfortunately, athletes don't normally receive instruction on breathing rhythms and their effect. These exercises will help your player understand different breathing rhythms and how they relate to game situations.

The purpose of this first exercise, is to develop smooth breathing rhythms. The idea is to make the transition from inhale to exhale so smooth, that the performer doesn't realize it has occurred.

Count from 1 to 5 on each breath. After each set of five breaths, have players rate the smoothness of their transition. (1) represents a rough, obvious transition, while 8 would be smooth and unnoticeable.

TRANSITION RATING

ROUGH SMOOTH

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Breath 1	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 2	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 3	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 4	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 5	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5

Rate Smoothness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Breath 1	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 2	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 3	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 4	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 5	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5

Rate Smoothness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Breath 1	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 2	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 3	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 4	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 5	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5

Rate Smoothness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Breath 1	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 2	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 3	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 4	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5
Breath 5	In	1 2 3 4 5	Out 1 2 3 4 5

Rate Smoothness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

RHYTHMIC BREATHING

This exercise will help players learn to breath in rhythm with their game activity. For example, batters and pitchers both need a specific breathing rhythm, coordinated with the swing or the pitch. To a certain degree, breathing rhythm is a personal choice.

Try both these breathing rhythms, first the 4 count, then the 3 count. Inhale, hold the breath, exhale, then pause, using the time count shown. When finished, answer the questions at the end of the exercise.

FOUR COUNT RHYTHM

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

In, 2, 3, 4 Hold, 2, 3, 4,
Out, 2, 3, 4, Pause, 2, 3,4.

Consider the 4 count rhythm.
In what segments of softball
would this useful?

THREE COUNT RHYTHM

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

In, 2, 3, Hold, 2, 3,
Out, 2, 3 Pause, 2, 3.

Consider the 3 count rhythm.
In what segments of softball
would it be useful?

Would these breathing rhythms be helpful in preparing for a competition? If so, how?

TOTAL BREATHING PROGRAM

Read the instructions for this exercise several times until they are perfectly clear. Do not start until you are comfortable with each step and the complete sequence.

For the purpose of this exercise, imagine the lungs divided into three parts, the UPPER, MIDDLE and LOWER sections.

Every inhale should be a long, slow, deep breath, taken through the nose. Inhale the maximum amount of air possible. Exhale slowly and completely, feeling all the tension leaving the body as the air is exhaled. Repeat a cue word, such as "relax" as you exhale. That cue will become associated with the relaxation response in due course.

INSTRUCTIONS**TAKE A COMPLETE BREATH, APPLYING EACH STEP IN SEQUENCE.**

- | <u>STEP</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|-------------|---|
| 1. | Fill the <i>LOWER SECTION</i> by pushing the diaphragm down and forcing the abdomen out. |
| 2. | Fill the <i>MIDDLE SECTION</i> by expanding the <i>CHEST CAVITY</i> and raising the <i>RIB CAGE AND CHEST</i> . |
| 3. | Fill the <i>UPPER SECTION</i> by raising the <i>CHEST AND SHOULDERS</i> . |
| 4. | <i>HOLD</i> the breath for 3 or 4 seconds, then,

<i>EXHALE SLOWLY</i> from the <i>BOTTOM</i> of the lungs. |
| 5. | <i>RAISE</i> the diaphragm by pulling the <i>ABDOMEN</i> in. |
| 6. | Empty the lungs by <i>LOWERING</i> the <i>CHEST AND SHOULDERS</i> . |
| 7. | Force out the last bit of air by pulling the <i>ABDOMEN</i> in further. |
| 8. | Allow the <i>ABDOMEN & CHEST</i> to completely relax. Let go of all muscular action. |

REPEAT THESE STEPS FOR TWENTY (20) CONSECUTIVE BREATHS DAILY.