



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Life Skills



What's inside

Ready for an interview? Know how to network? What about managing finances? We can help you build these vital life skills. Read on to improve your competences outside the sporting arena.

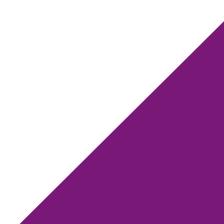


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1. Introduction

In the Life Skills pillar, we will help you build success beyond your sport. That means everything that happens outside the arena. We will help you understand how your skills as a sports person can be valuable in other areas of your life, like finances, media management and public speaking.

Regardless of where you are in your career, these skills play an important role in driving self-confidence, both on and off the field of play.

You can find more information in the free, online IOC Athlete Learning Gateway courses called ‘[Athlete Career Transition](#)’ and ‘[Sports Media - Creating your winning profile](#)’.

“ I really wish I had understood earlier how important life skills can be in all areas of my life. I hope that all athletes will take advantage of the materials available through the IOC ACP and benefit from them across all aspects of their life and not just in the sporting context. ”

— Amadou Dia Ba, Athletics.



“ Sport taught me essential things I did not learn at school and I always valued the impact it had on my life. The materials in the IOC ACP will guide you in the process of using your talent in sport to develop precious life skills. It’s important to take the time to think about how your talent in sport and the skills you develop as an athlete can be transferred to other areas of life. ”

— Stefan Holm, Athletics.



2. How to speak to the media

This section will help you deal with your media commitments in a professional and friendly manner. Nobody is born with these skills. But by using these tips, you will be well on the way to developing a positive image of yourself, through the media.

“ It is easy to be caught off-guard by the media. Whether you are fighting through the mixed zone or you answer an unexpected phone call, it is best to always be prepared. How you react and what you say in these brief moments may have more impact than what you say during a well-planned interview.

So, how can you best prepare yourself to handle the media more effectively? My experience has taught me to be prepared, be honest, and learn from those around me. ”

— Danka Bartekova, Shooting



PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

The biggest trick for a successful media interview is to be prepared. No matter what the circumstances – whether it’s scheduled far in advance or pops up unexpectedly – you should always be ready.

To prepare, ask yourself these questions, either far in advance, or in a few quick seconds before an unexpected interview starts:

- Who is the interviewer? What media source are they from? Why are they interested in me?
- How will this interview be seen – print, TV, radio, online?
- What audiences will I reach?
- What does this audience know or think about me and my sport?
- What are some likely questions? Have I done something interesting? Is my sport, team or country facing any issues?
- What is the main message I want to get across?

To help you prepare, use the printable worksheet [Media preparation #1](#).

For any interview, it is important to have a main message; something you would like to share with the world. An interview isn't just about answering questions that the media has, but also sharing your own thoughts about yourself, your sport, your country or a subject that's important to you.

For developing a more complete message, try the printable worksheet [Media preparation #2](#).

Once you are prepared and have your message, follow these tips to make sure the interview is a success for you.

1. First, answer the question, but then always use a bridge to end your answer with your key message.

2. Keep your answers short and clear.

3. Use proof to back up your claims – for example, rather than just saying, “I’m in my best shape for this competition”, you could say, “I’m in my best shape for this competition, because I have been working on new methods of training with my coach and have been working with a nutritionist.”

Exercises for preparing and practising

- Using the printable worksheets [Media preparation #1](#) and [Media preparation #2](#), write out some scenarios specific to you and your sport.
- Go over them with a coach, training partner or friend to seek feedback on your responses.
- If possible, do this while training so that as you finish a session, your answers will closely mirror the actual situation.

Printable worksheets 

> [Media preparation #1](#)

> [Media preparation #2](#)

PROJECTING A POSITIVE IMAGE

We all want to project a good image to the public. How the media portrays you definitely affects how people will perceive you.

Here are some tips to help you take control of your public image:

- Mind your body language. Use an open posture and direct your attention to the journalist. Give them a smile.
- Show your emotions; excitement and joy will be infectious. Make yourself personable and real; if you're disappointed or frustrated, it's ok to show these emotions as well.
- Always be positive when talking about your competitors, the competition or your teammates.
- If challenged on an issue during the competition, use vague comments like, "I'm not sure what happened there. But I'm sure the officials will let us know if there was something wrong."
- Always stay calm and be polite even if the interviewer provokes you.

- If at all possible, never answer "no comment" or "off the record".
- Give more than one word answers even if this is the correct answer to the question. Elaborate and expand your answer. One-word answers give the journalists nothing to work with and will make you come across as very closed.
- If there is a misleading assertion in a question, correct it immediately at the start of your answer:

Example question:

"Even though your preparation was interrupted, it seemed like you were able to win easily?"

Answer:

"My preparation was not ideal, but I have a fantastic support team to assist me. I thought the competition today was of a very high standard."

- Beware of trying to fill any gaps if the journalist goes silent. Avoid saying something just to fill the silence; as you might end up saying more than you planned.



HANDLING UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS

While most interviews, press conferences and appearances will be professional and civil, there may be uncomfortable moments. But there are strategies you can use to ease the tension and steer the conversation in a more positive direction.

The key to any uncomfortable moment with the media is staying calm and polite. That way, you'll deflect the tension, establish a clear boundary and take the conversation in a more comfortable direction. You also develop credibility as someone the media respects, while building a positive image as an athlete who stays professional under pressure.

Stay calm

When you feel that a question makes you uncomfortable, take a moment to think and not overreact. By overreacting, you may give the journalist a new story to report.

It's OK to say, "I don't know"

You should never comment on something about which you are not informed. Don't feel pressured to answer a question just because they asked it. Politely ask for more information. If you don't feel like you have all the facts, or if you feel like the interviewer is leading you down an uncomfortable line of questioning, feel free to say (politely and calmly) that you don't know enough to make a well-informed comment. If it's about a teammate, you can say that you don't talk about others. And if it's about your personal life, you can say that you only comment on your professional career, not your private life.

Trust your intuition

If a line of questioning is making you uncomfortable, trust the way you're feeling. It may be that you don't have enough information or that the questioning is entering an aspect of your life that you prefer to keep private. Even though you're a public figure, you can still set reasonable boundaries that the media should respect.

Further resources and help

- Contact your NOC, institute of sport or your Athletes' Commission – they may have media specialists who can train you.
- Look for media or communication courses at an open university or community college.
- Find taped interviews online of your favourite athletes and watch how they deal with the media.
- Check out the free, online IOC Athlete Learning Gateway course '[Sports Media – Creating your winning profile](#)'.

3. How to be a good public speaker

Public speaking is something everyone can do and just about everyone can improve on. But you need proper preparation and practice. This section will help you get your message across in a professional and inspiring way.

“As elite athletes, we are often called upon, formally or spontaneously, to share our stories with diverse audiences. The experiences of being an elite athlete, taking part in the Olympic Games, living in the Olympic Village, and being part of the global sports community exemplify the Olympic ideals of fair play, respect and universality. Each and every journey is unique. The opportunity to communicate the magic of each athlete’s journey is one which can leave a lasting impact on individuals, communities and the world.”

— Kirsty Coventry, Swimming.



“As an athlete, you may not choose to be a role model, but given the visibility and contribution that sport makes in society today, you may not have a choice. I suggest you embrace this opportunity. At one point in our lives we were all aspiring athletes who looked up to a role model who may have been a fellow athlete, a coach or perhaps a family member. We looked up to them because they were a positive force in our life and it is important to remember this for ourselves.”

— Alexander Popov, Swimming.



DEVELOPING YOUR STORY

Whether you've been asked to give a speech or a presentation, the preparation is very similar. Below are a number of ideas to help you structure and prepare the speech, with further ideas and information available in the worksheets section.

To start with, **think about your audience**; are they young children or a group of business people? Each audience will want something different from you.

Secondly, **think about the expectations**. The people arranging the presentation should be able to advise you on the topic and format. Ask them for guidance on what the audience will be expecting. This should give you some ideas for what you want to present to them.

Then, you can **develop your story**. Many of the best presentations tell a story. The basic story line is something like this: a likable hero comes across a problem, resolves it and comes out the winner. There's a moment where the audience clearly gets it and their perspective shifts as they understand your message. Presentations are generally more successful when the substance, or story being told in the presentation, is good. What is important is the idea, the story, and the passion of the speaker.

To make notes on your own story use the printable worksheet [Creating your story](#).

When you have an outline of your story, draft each point onto separate sticky notes and make sure that they follow a good rhythm and logical sequence. Most people expect a start, middle and a conclusion.

Watch some presentations online. And then ask someone to help you spot the rhythm of the presentation and what the main message is. For help with noting a presentation use the printable worksheet [You try it!](#)

Printable worksheets 

> [Creating your story](#)

> [You try it!](#)

KEEPING THE AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION

Imagine for a moment, the speaker comes to the podium and at the same time he or she starts to speak, an endless stream of fancy, smart, animated slides are projected on a screen. The slides literally repeat what the speaker is saying. So, rather than listening to the speaker, you find yourself reading the slides ahead of them.

You can deliver a much better presentation with these simple hints.

Stand to the left side of the screen (from the audience's view)

Our minds (in the Western world) read from left to right – as you are doing now – reading this text.

It's much better for an audience to read that way too. So stand to the left side (from the audience's view) of the screen and then make a reference to something on the screen to the right. In Arab-speaking countries you must consider changing sides even if your slides are not in Arabic.

Help the audience to focus their attention

What do you want the audience to focus on? On you and what you say? Or on the slides you show? They can't do both at the same time. So the basic rhythm must be: first you say something, then you direct the audience's attention to the screen, then you give them time to read/watch and then you direct the audience's attention to you, and so on.



More graphics, less text

If you speak clearly, then the audience can hear and understand you – so don't project on a screen what you are saying. It doesn't add any value to your presentation and it will only make the audience less attentive.

Slides are excellent for showing graphics, statistics, drawing, photos, etc. – not for repeating what you are saying. Search for examples online for inspiration.

Use the slides as your cue cards

If it's boring to hear a speaker using an endless stream of slides, it's even more boring if such a speaker also reads from a script. A great advantage of using presentation slides is that they can serve as your cue cards on what the next important point is, and they can help you to stay in tune with the audience.

Try without!

The most brilliant and charismatic speakers don't use slides; they don't need to. Why don't you set yourself the target that, let's say every third time you make a formal presentation, you don't use slides. You could use a white-board or a flip-chart, but break the rhythm and avoid becoming a slave to slides. Your audience will listen to you even more.

How to deliver a great speech

Nothing strikes more fear into the hearts of athletes than having to give a presentation or speech in front of a crowd. Taking the time to learn some public speaking tips can go a long way when it comes to calming your nerves. The following covers three simple things you can do to prepare for your public speaking.



Speak on a topic that is familiar to you

One way to guarantee success is to give speeches on topics you know – like your sports performances. The topic should ideally be something that you are sincerely interested in. Your knowledge and passion for the topic will convey sincerity and excitement to your audience. It will keep them engaged.

Practise your speech as often as you can

Hearing yourself speak out loud can be awkward, but the simple act of practising your speech will help you avoid potential stumbles when you give your speech. Be sure to also focus on your breathing and eliminating as many “hms” as you can. Practising your speech will help to make sure that your presentation goes as smoothly as possible.

Find your comfort zone

When you have a choice, find a position that is most comfortable for you. Some people are much more comfortable standing behind a podium. Some are more comfortable moving around and engaging more with the audience. Are you more comfortable standing or sitting? Find your comfort zone so you can speak with ease.

Follow these three public speaking tips for a great speech: know your topic inside out, practise out loud, and try to stick to a format where you are most comfortable. Then no longer will you have to let public speaking strike fear into your heart.

PREPARING PROPERLY

No matter how much experience you have in giving speeches, you should always create an outline for your presentation. It's just like creating a training programme for your sport. This isn't to say that public speakers actually refer to the outlines during their speech, but they are fully aware of the outline. This guarantees you're fully prepared to get your message across effectively. Preparation is not the only reason to create a speech outline; keeping your audience engaged is another important reason. From an audience's perspective, there is nothing worse than listening to continuous ramblings from an unstructured presenter. When you take the time to prepare an outline for your upcoming speech, it will flow well, stay on track, and keep your audience on their toes. They'll be wanting to know what you're going to say next.

Use your speech outline

A speech outline is a good idea, even for seasoned public speakers. It helps you to be prepared, keep to the point and flow from one topic to the next with ease, whilst keeping a good tempo to your speech.

Video your practice

As with your sport, recording and reviewing yourself will help you improve. While it might not be your favourite thing to do, watching yourself speak is the most effective way of making better speeches.

Warm up your mouth

Practise tongue twisters before your speech. You may think that sounds silly, but tongue twisters really improve your diction in a short period of time. If nobody can understand what you're saying, your audience will quickly tune you out and ignore what you have to say.

Relax

Before going on stage, inhale deeply through your mouth and exhale very slowly through your nose. This will help you to relax and calm your nerves. When you're relaxed, you appear confident to your audience. You can also use other relaxation exercises that you already use before your sports competition.

Be prepared for questions

If you're asked a question and stumble to find the answer, it could ruin your perfect presentation. As an athlete you may be asked many questions that are completely off topic. So be prepared for these questions. They may range from your career, personal life or training methods, to some recent sports news or issues. Listen to each question, take a moment to think, and then provide a short answer.

Prepare your equipment

As any athlete knows, knowing your equipment is in order helps you stay relaxed and concentrated on the race. Similarly, make sure there are no surprises or last-minute problems that will destroy the good work you've done. The printable worksheet [Presentation equipment checklist](#) will help you stay organised for your presentation.

Remember that most people fear public speaking, and the fact that you are doing what they fear will automatically put you in a positive light. Prepare properly and you are sure to shine.

Further resources and help

- Watch online videos of athletes presenting.
- Contact your NOC, local institute of sport or Athletes' Commission representative for advice.
- Try an open university, community college, or other educational institution near you for presentation classes.
- Join a [toastmasters club](#).
- Check out the free, online IOC Athlete Learning Gateway course '[Athlete Career Transition](#)'.

Printable worksheets 

> [Presentation equipment \(checklist\)](#)

4. How to improve your problem-solving skills

There are a number of tools available for solving problems. We are going to explain two of the key ones in this section. Some tools are specific to an industry or type of work and many are specifically related to business and resolving business related problems.

“The most important thing with problems is looking at them as challenges, and knowing where to start. This simple philosophy really helps to break it down to the most basic level, simplifying the whole problem solving process. Enjoy! ”

— Ole Einar Bjørndalen, Biathlon



SWOT ANALYSIS TOOL

SWOT analysis is a powerful technique for understanding your strengths and weaknesses, and for looking at the opportunities and threats you face. This tool is quite general in nature and will help you make decisions about your future, your career direction and life choices. You can use it to develop your career in a way that makes the most of your talents, abilities and opportunities.

What makes a SWOT analysis particularly powerful is that, with a little thought, it can help you uncover new opportunities. It also helps you understand your weaknesses, so you can manage and eliminate threats that may otherwise catch you out.

To carry out a SWOT analysis (see the printable worksheet [Conducting a SWOT Analysis](#), write down answers to the following questions :

Printable worksheets 

> [Conducting a SWOT Analysis](#)

Strengths

- What advantages (for example, skills, education or connections) do you have that many others don't have?
- What do you do better than others you know?
- What personal resources do you have access to?
- What do other people (and your coach in particular) see as your strengths?

Consider this from your own perspective, and from the point of view of the people around you. And don't be modest; be as objective as you can. If you're having trouble, try writing down a list of your characteristics. Some of these will surely be your strengths!

Weaknesses

- What could you improve?
- What should you avoid?
- What things are the people around you likely to see as weaknesses?

Again, consider this from a personal and external basis: do other people perceive weaknesses that you don't see? Do others consistently out-perform you in key areas? It is best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

Opportunities

- Where are the good opportunities facing you?
- What are the interesting trends you are aware of?

Useful opportunities can come from such things as:

- Changes in government policy related to your field.
- Changes in social patterns, population profiles, life style, etc.
- Local events.

A useful approach to looking at opportunities is also to look at your strengths and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at your weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating them.

Threats

- What obstacles do you face?
- What are the people around you doing?
- Is your job (or the demand for the things you do) changing?
- Is changing technology threatening your position?
- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten you?

This analysis will often be illuminating – both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done, and in putting problems into perspective.

THE "5 WHYS" TOOL

This is a simple problem-solving technique that helps you get to the base problem quickly. The "5 Whys" strategy involves looking at any problem and asking: "Why?" and "What caused this problem?"

Very often, the answer to the first "why" will prompt another "why" and the answer to the second "why" will prompt another and so on; hence the name.

Benefits of the “5 Whys”

- Helps to quickly determine the base root of a problem.
- Easy to learn and apply.

How to use the “5 Whys”

When trying to solve a problem, start with the end result and work backwards (reverse engineering), continually asking: Why?

You will need to repeat this over and over until the root cause of the problem becomes apparent.

The “5 Whys” process consists of simple techniques that can help you quickly get to the bottom of a problem. But that is all it is, and the more complex things get, the more likely it is to lead you down a false trail. If it doesn't quickly give you an answer that's obviously right, then you may need more sophisticated problem-solving techniques.

Here's an example of the “5 Whys” as an effective solution:

1. Why is my coach unhappy?

Because I did not arrive at training when I said I would.

2. Why was I unable to meet the agreed timeline or schedule for training?

School took much longer than I thought it would.

3. Why did it take so much longer?

Because I was talking to friends.

4. Why did I underestimate the time talking to friends?

Because I did not realise the time and did not have training on my mind.

5. Why didn't you have training on your mind?

Because I was unmotivated and wanted to catch up with friends.

The next step in this case might be to discuss why you are not motivated at the moment and, together with your coach, develop some new goals.

The “5 Whys” strategy is so elementary in nature, it can be adapted quickly and applied to almost any problem. Bear in mind, however, that if it doesn't prompt an intuitive answer, then you'll need to use another problem solving technique.

Further resources and help

- Contact a local or online open university, or community college for problem solving courses.
- Research other online problem solving tools using the search term “problem-solving tools”.
- Check out the free, online IOC Athlete Learning Gateway course '[Athlete Career Transition](#)'.

5. How to set SMART goals

Goal-setting is like a map. The big-picture goal is the destination, and the short-term goals are the steps that take you there. Make your goals straightforward to create your satisfaction and self-confidence in your performance.

“ Goal-setting is such an important part of training and preparing for competition that whether you realise it or not you are probably setting SMART goals all the time. The difference is that now you know you are, and you can ensure that you continue to set them properly. ”

— Yang Yang, Speed Skating.



WHAT ARE SMART GOALS?

Have you ever felt like the Olympic Games, or world or national championships etc. are a long way away? Sometimes you can see little motivation in going for a 5am run. This is why you need to set clearer goals.

Think about what you want to achieve in life (the big picture or the long term aim) and then break this down to small, short-term goals. This will help you to see the big picture but also to maintain motivation for each of the steps that you need to take to get there.

As an athlete, you will need to know where you are heading. A way to help you remember the make-up of effective goal-setting is to use SMART goals:

Specific: Smart objectives are objectives which specify exactly what they want to achieve – they are measurable, achievable, relevant and time-related.

Measurable: By establishing measurable objectives you should be able – at any time during the project – to measure whether you are meeting them or not.

Achievable: You can achieve almost any objective you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps.

Relevant: To be relevant, an objective is one which you are both willing and able to work on. It can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your objective should be. But be sure that every objective represents substantial progress.

Time-related: An objective should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency.

Everyone will benefit from setting SMART goals both inside and outside the sporting arena.

KEEPING A BALANCE

When the time pressure in life increases, we tend to let some things slip. This might happen without you even noticing. Things soon become major issues and everything starts to become too much.

It's vital as an elite athlete to look ahead and plan your day, week, month or year. Stay positive and be realistic about what you can achieve. It's also important to:

- Know your own capabilities and the areas you need to work on for development.
- Understand expectations and the benefits of teamwork.
- See the people around you as helpers, guides or mentors.

We may not all agree to do things the same way, but we can change the way we think and behave in response to our ever-changing environments.



6. How to network effectively

Have you ever heard the following expression: “80% of jobs are never advertised”? It’s true. About 70-80% of jobs are filled by a pre-selected candidate. So how can you compete in the job market when so many jobs are filled without a formal application process? The secret is networking.

Effective networking can help you to:

- Get a job
- Get a sponsor
- Get some great new tips or ideas
- Meet people and make new friends.

Basic networking requires little effort and is not complicated. With the right attitude and approach, you can create a network that supports your personal and professional success for years to come. So how can you start building a network or growing a network you already have in place?

“ I didn’t have a problem meeting people. The trouble was, I never did any follow-up or kept in contact with people on a regular basis. When I thought about a person it was usually only when I needed help. I realised I was not making the most of my network. ”

— Yumilka Ruiza Luaces, Volleyball.



WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is the art of meeting people and building relationships. It's not just about contacting everyone you know when you are looking for a new job. Networking starts long before a job search. In fact, you might already be doing it.

Whether you know it or not, you are networking when you:

- Attend professional meetings or conferences.
- Talk to athletes, coaches or trainers from other areas or sports.
- Strike up a conversation with someone while waiting in line at the grocery store.
- Develop a social media presence:
 - Set up a profile on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
 - Follow people you would like to know more about.
 - Post messages and updates on what you are doing on the various sites you use. (See also the [social media guidelines for Olympic athletes](#) for further information.)
 - Talk to spectators/fans after the game.

While networking is very common and occurs in almost every social outing, there are some misconceptions about what networking actually is. To clarify, here is a short list of some of those misconceptions. Networking is not:

- **Making cold-calls to people you don't know.** It's talking to people you do know and asking them to introduce you to others.
- **Carefully choreographing meetings and greeting people insincerely.** Networking is much more effective when done more casually.
- **Just for your benefit.** Networking is a two-way street and must benefit both persons to be truly effective. So, when you ask your network for help, be prepared to return the favour.

EXPLORING DIFFERENT NETWORKS

On a daily basis, you probably interact with colleagues, friends and even strangers. These interactions are all opportunities for networking.

Here are four types of networks :

1. Personal networks.

These include family, friends and close associates. You usually choose these types of networks through mutual interests or connections. Personal networks are more social than other types of networks and are based on an exchange of help and support.

2. Organisational networks.

These include project groups, committees and councils. These networks are focused on whom you need to know to achieve objectives within a specific time frame. They are typically based on power, knowledge and influence.

3. Professional networks.

These networks are comprised of colleagues and peers. They can be internal or external, meaning they can exist within a place of business or outside the office as part of an industry in general. For example, your current training team would be an internal professional network, whereas your National or International Federation would be an external professional network.

4. Strategic networks.

These include external contacts and connections. You can establish strategic networks within social, political, civic or religious organisations or other groups with whom you may have regular contact.

Regardless of what area you are in now, and what career you want to have after sport, it is important to have a diverse network across many areas, industries and countries. You never know when you might need an introduction.

You may have already started thinking about how you can expand each of the four networks described above – new groups you could join, meetings and conferences you'd like to attend, and new people you'd like to talk to. Social media platforms are also a great way to expand your network. However, it is important to remember that the people you already know could be the most influential people in your network.

GOOD PREPARATION

To effectively network, you need to explain who you are, what you offer and what you're looking for. By stating your goals and needs clearly, people in your network can offer more specific advice, or connect you with people providing specialised knowledge or support. For example, "I am looking for a new sprint coach", is specific.

Quick tips

- Introduce yourself confidently and explain clearly what you are doing or seeking (generally or at this specific event).
- Create and practise a 30-second elevator speech with the printable worksheet. [Creating a 30-second Elevator Speech](#).
- Carry a business card. You don't need to be employed or have a private company. A simple card with your private details, phone number and blog or website (if you have one) is all you need.
- Ask for their business card or contact details, or give them yours.

Further resources and help

- Contact a local or online open university, or community college.
- Research other online tools using the search term "networking".
- Check out the free, online IOC Athlete Learning Gateway course '[Athlete Career Transition](#)'.

Printable worksheets 

> [Creating a 30-second Elevator Speech](#)



7. How to manage your finances

The lack of financial stability can cause major stress, both whilst training and competing, and when you retire from sport. In some cases, this has caused athletes to retire early to seek full-time employment. In this section, we will help you to understand your financial position, and help you manage your finances better.

As an athlete, your financial management is different in many respects from other people. The following points help to illustrate why.

Generally elite athletes often have :

- Short careers in sport, therefore the income earned needs to be spread further to cover career gaps.
- A public image that can make you susceptible to scams.
- Little experience in financial management.
- Unpredictable income due to the threat of injury or de-selection.
- Unfinished or no educational qualifications.

It pays to have a good structure in place and a sound understanding of your finances. This reduces stress and the financial pressures associated with your performance.

We are going to provide you with information that is general to all sports. But different sports, disciplines and countries will have different issues – so you should look them up.

“ Understanding your finances will give you peace of mind. Leaving them to sort themselves out WILL lead to mess and probably a lot of extra cost and time to sort it out. Understanding your finances is your job not someone else’s. ”

— James Tomkins, Rowing.



DEVELOPING A FINANCIAL PLAN

Every athlete's career has a life span. We all know there are limits on how long you can be a full-time athlete. Depending on your sport this can vary, but it is important to understand there is life beyond your athletic career and it is important to plan ahead. This includes continuing your education and planning for your future income during your career.

Remember your career can come to a sudden end. Many athletes are unfortunately forced in retirement through injury or missed selection. How would you cope with this sudden change? Do you have good support around you and do you have a clear understanding of your finances? It is important to have a clear view of all parts of your career; this includes your financial situation. Once you understand your situation it can become less daunting.

Independent advice

Setting up your finances and seeking professional advice can be very worthwhile. There are many financial and tax options available, and a professional advisor is best placed to find what suits your individual situation. Professional advisors can also save you money in the long run as they will know exactly what you are able to claim as a tax deduction and how best to manage this.

Seeking independent financial advice is best, so that you can find a financial solution tailored to your individual circumstances. Ask fellow athletes, your coach, and your local or national sporting federation to help guide you to find an accountant or financial advisor. If possible, it's best if they have previous experience in working with athletes.

We recommend that you keep your financial advisor separate, and independent, from other members of your team. A financial planner can help you with the following areas:

- Investing – shares, property, business.
- Loans.
- Pension plans.
- Retirement planning.
- Budgeting.
- Insurance.
- Savings.

Ask questions

If there is something you don't understand, remember to ask questions. It is better to ask and be sure about something than to find out that you have not understood further down the track. There are many opportunities and options for your money and you should always have your finances under your own control. In order to communicate on the right level with agents, planners and financial institutions, it is important to be fully informed of your own financial matters, goals and expectations now and in the future.

MAKING A BUDGET

In order to put together an accurate budget, you need to understand your income, your expenses and what tax needs to be paid. Depending on your income, there are different ways to plan a budget. Here are some examples.

Know your income and then plan how you spend it

If you know what your income is going to be, planning your budget and knowing how much you can allocate to different expenses is all part of good financial management. You may have to cut back on certain areas, or you may be able to afford to spend more in certain areas. The key is to understand what you can afford, and to plan for the future. For more information on income, see the section on [Understanding Different Incomes](#).

Know your expenses and plan how you will cover costs

If you know how much it will cost to pay for your living and sporting costs, then you can look for sponsorship, funding or work opportunities to fit with your requirements. Knowing your budget also gives you a good understanding of where you may be able to cut costs, or areas where it may be beneficial to spend more (e.g. insurance) if you receive extra income. For more information on income, see the section on [Understanding Different Expenses](#).

It is always good to look ahead and know what income and expenses are coming, so you can deal with anything. For example, planning and understanding how you would manage financially in the event of an injury or if you sign a lucrative sponsorship deal. An important part of budgeting is working out how much you can save and thinking about your eventual retirement and transition out of full-time sport.



UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT INCOME

As an athlete you can be exposed to different types and sources of income. Outlined below are some of the key income streams you may come across.

Different types of income/remuneration

Salary/wages: a fixed sum of money paid in compensation for your services. The salary or wage is paid on a regular basis, as defined by your contract.

Signing bonuses: a sum of money paid to a new athlete by a club as an incentive to join. Signing bonuses are often given as a way of making a compensation package more attractive e.g. if the annual salary is lower than you want. Signing bonuses are quite common in professional sports.

Performance bonus: a form of additional compensation paid as a reward for achieving specific performances or hitting goals (game wins, placements, times or scores). A performance bonus is compensation beyond your normal wage and is typically awarded after a performance appraisal. They are mostly linked to contracts with a team or a sponsor.

Sponsorship: monetary payment, services or other support from a company or entity. Your sponsors expect that by aligning themselves with you or your team they will gain influence in the market place, for example, through improved recognition of their brand.

VIK (value in kind): a situation when you might receive a product or service instead of money. VIK can include things like receiving a car,

watch, prizes, equipment, etc. It is mostly linked to a sponsorship contract.

Appearance fee: a payment for attending events, for example, competition events or promotional events.

Prize money: a payment for results at competitions, usually paid by event organisers.

Scholarship: financial or other support from an entity e.g. sports federation, educational institution, NOC, government or other organisations. These are often paid directly to you, or on your behalf, to supplement your education or training expenses. A scholarship may support you with tuition or coaching fees, accommodation, transport costs, books or equipment, etc.

Government grants: financial support which is usually paid directly to you through government departments. Earning income from several different sources places you in a unique situation in relation to accounting, filing tax returns and social security contributions. Knowing if your income is subject to tax, social security and/or other contributions depends on your individual circumstances. You should contact your NOC or a local accountant or tax advisor to find out if you are deemed to be carrying out a trade or profession, and therefore be subject to income tax. See also the next section on [How to understand your tax obligations](#).

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT EXPENSES

Expenses are classified as anything where money is being paid out. As an athlete your expenses can be divided into a number of different categories.

Living expenses

Include all the costs associated with everyday living:

- Rent/Mortgage.
- Education/School.
- Nutrition/Food.
- Bills: Electricity/Water/Gas/Internet.
- Clothes.
- Hairdresser/Personal Care/Hygiene.
- Doctor/Dentist/Optometrlist.
- Car/Transport.
- Entertainment.
- Holidays.
- Taxes.
- Phone.
- Social security contributions.
- Insurance.
- Gifts.

Training and competition expenses

Include things you pay for in order to perform as an athlete:

- Coaching fees.
- Training facilities.
- Physiotherapy.
- Massage.

- Supplements.
- Competition entry fees.
- Travel – flights and accommodation
- Equipment

Most training expenses can be classified as tax deductions, but there is a fine line between training costs and living costs. Each athlete's circumstance is unique, so seek professional advice to find out what you are, and are not, able to claim. See also the next section on Understanding your tax obligations.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TAX OBLIGATIONS

Taxation or tax, is a financial charge that people have to pay when they work. Tax is collected by governments so they can run their country and fund their government services. Failure to pay your taxes is usually punishable by law. And paying your taxes late will often incur a fine.

Depending on the legislation of your country, taxes can include:

- Personal income tax, based on a person's yearly income.
- Corporate tax based on a company's yearly profit.
- Value Added Tax (VAT), or similar, is a tax on purchased goods and services.
- Capital gains taxes and other taxes.

Tax rates vary, depending on where you are living, how much you are earning and how your situation is qualified depending on the tax law (i.e. salaried worker, independent, freelance worker).

Athletes and tax

The income of an athlete who is profiting from their sport (making a living out of what they do) can be fully taxable. Athletes with other forms of income outside sport can fall into a complex middle ground. So it's very important to understand the specific rules and tax laws for your country. And always make sure you follow these as your career progresses and your circumstances change.

In almost all countries prize money and appearance fees are subject to income tax. Professional athletes participating in an event abroad are subject to the withholding tax in the hosting country. Organisers who pay appearance and prize money have special regulations concerning remuneration calculations, deductions and the payment of fees.

You are responsible for paying the appropriate taxes and you should therefore consult the organiser or the organising federation for further information. Ask the organisers if tax will be paid before you receive it and whether you are required to pay tax.

Your country of residence also has its own tax and financial regulations. In some cases you may need to also pay tax on this income in your own country. So make sure you know where you stand, to avoid any late fees.

Tax deductions

If your income is taxable it means you may be eligible to claim tax deductions. Tax deductions are usually allowable for any costs incurred by you to produce your income. For example, as an athlete, your training and competition expenses could qualify as a tax deduction.

Again this is very specific to local tax laws, and you will need to obtain local advice.

Keeping records

Keep all receipts and records of your expenses in one place for each financial year. You will need these as proof when you claim your tax deductions.



Independent advice

Ask fellow athletes, your coach and your local/national sporting federation to help guide you to find the best accountant or financial advisor. It's best if they have previous experience in working with athletes. We recommend you keep your financial advisor separate, and independent, from other members of your team, for example, not your family, friends or agent.

Protecting your finances

In order to protect yourself from unexpected financial problems, you should insure yourself against the unexpected.

Here are some of the different types of insurance:

Illness and Injury (Health) insurance: not having health insurance when you are suffering from a serious illness or accident could result in a huge financial burden. Often this insurance, in whole or in part, is paid by your employer, so read your contract to find out. If it is not covered, we recommend that you take out your own health insurance.

Disability insurance: in the event you should become disabled, this insurance will provide you with a stable monthly income.

Loss of income insurance: this insurance is usually very expensive and should be discussed with your club or your employer.

Theft insurance: this type of insurance is usually taken out for your property (rented or owned) or vehicle and will cover you for losses incurred as a result of theft.

Third party liability insurance: this covers damage or injury you might cause to someone else (a third party).

Travel insurance: this is for medical costs abroad, for evacuation in the case of an emergency, and for lost luggage and equipment. Good travel insurance can help you avoid unexpected costs when you're abroad.

Retirement insurance: this helps to retain your usual life style at retirement age.

Further research and help

- Contact a local accountant or financial advisor.
- Contact your NOC for further information.
- Talk to senior teammates and athletes for advice.

8. How to get the most from social media

The rise of social media means you can now be much more in control of your public image. You can communicate directly with your fans, speaking straight to individuals or target groups. You can even tailor information to suit your audiences needs and appetites.

In this section, we will show you how to use social media as a tool to achieve your goals and objectives. And we will look at some of the critical factors that help you get the best results. We won't provide detailed technical information about each of the platforms, but we will give you a sense of how social media can be useful for athletes like you.

“ Understanding how to use social media was a big step for me in taking control of my own future. It gave me a voice and allowed me to show my personality to fans, sponsors and the world. In a short space of time I have managed to use social media intelligently to leverage my personality and generate opportunities. ”

— Todd Nicholson, Sledge Hockey.



WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media allows people to create, share and consume content in many forms across online communities. It puts you in touch with millions of people across the world. Look at it as another platform from which you can build and shape your personal brand.

Before the development of social media, athletes were connected with the public through traditional medias such as television profiles, radio interviews and magazine articles.

But now social media allows for instantaneous, digital two-way communication. It facilitates direct engagement with audiences and, for better or for worse, often eliminates the filter of a middle-man in the communication exchange between athletes and the public.

It is totally digitalised in its design, delivery and consumption and thus can be created and used anywhere, on-the-go.

While athletes use social media for many reasons, here are the main things it can help you do:

- Advocate a cause.
- Develop commercial opportunities.
- Build a personal brand.
- Attract employment opportunities.
- Increase media attention.

The biggest social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, now count hundreds of millions of users. The social media landscape changes rapidly, and new platforms are constantly being introduced.

Here are a few of the most established and popular platforms:

Platform	Nature of Site	Content	Time Needed frequency/duration
	social sharing	text, images, video	high/medium
	microblogging (140 characters max)	text, image, short videos	medium/short
	social sharing	images, videos	medium/short
	video publishing	video	medium/short
	professional networking	text, some images and videos	low/medium
	social sharing	text, images	medium/medium

For inspiration, here are some good examples of athletes who use these platforms successfully :

	
Athlete	Virginie Faivre
Sport	Freestyle Skiing
Platform	Twitter
Use	Advocating a cause



	
Athlete	Paddy Barnes
Sport	Boxing
Platform	Facebook
Use	Developing commercial opportunities



Athlete

Sport

Platform

Use

Hayley Wickenheiser

Ice Hockey

Facebook

Developing commercial opportunities



Athlete

Sport

Platform

Use

Danka Barteková

Shooting

Facebook

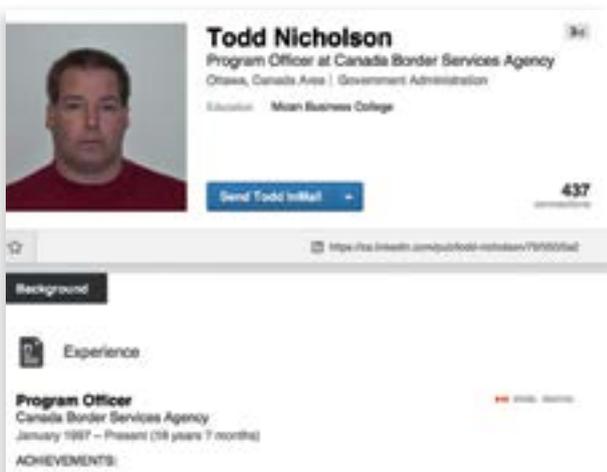
Advocating a cause

Athlete
Sport
Platform
Use



César Cielo

Swimming
Instagram
Building a personal brand



Athlete
Sport
Platform
Use



Todd Nicholson

Sledge hockey
LinkedIn
Attracting employment
and career opportunities

Athlete
Sport
Platform
Use



Kirsty Coventry

Swimming
Facebook
Attracting media attention



Athlete
Sport
Platform
Use



Claudia Bokel

Fencing
Twitter
Attracting media attention



Athlete
Sport
Platform
Use



Barbara Kendall

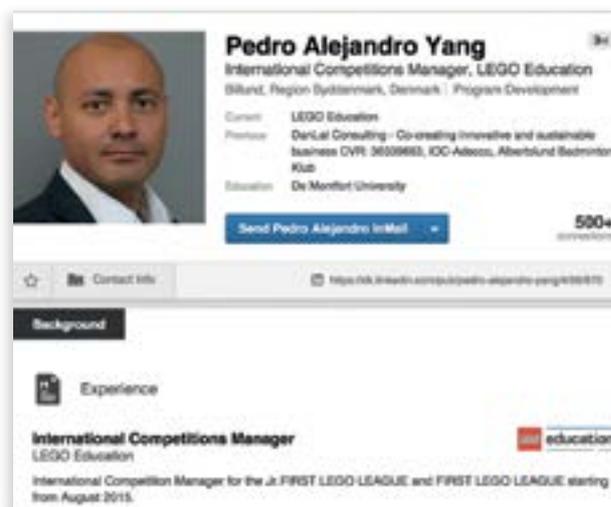
Windsurfing
Instagram
Building a personal brand

Athlete
Sport
Platform
Use



Pedro Alejandro Yang

Badminton
LinkedIn
Attracting employment and career opportunities



THE BENEFITS AND RISKS

Like any form of communication, there are benefits and risks to using social media. To a certain degree, these are more prominent in the use of social media due to the larger audience you can reach.

Here are some of the benefits:

It's quick, easy and cheap

You can access social media anywhere with a mobile device or computer connected to the internet. It's quick and generally doesn't cost a lot. You don't need to pay for an account. You don't need to pay for the printing of materials or wait for this material to be distributed. In today's connected world, social media is becoming increasingly used as the medium of choice for getting messages out quickly and cheaply.

You're in control

By publishing your own information, you have full control and ownership. Messages coming directly from your profile are unfiltered by anyone else. They can't be as easily manipulated or "spun" as they may be in a third party interview,

for example. However, as is the case with any other form of communication, once the information is out there, you can't control it, and it has the potential to be used against you.

Direct engagement

Media attention can rise and fall. For many reasons, you may no longer be under an intense media spotlight. Social media allows you to cut out traditional media and engage directly with your target audience. This means you can maintain a public profile and open up new opportunities. You can effectively target your preferred audience in accordance with your strategy. Social media allows you to direct your messages towards specific groups on the basis of criteria such as geography, interest and demographics, for example.



Here are some of the risks and challenges:

Making mistakes or errors of judgement

One of the biggest drawbacks of having total control is that if you say something wrong, or that could be perceived negatively, it can be difficult to escape the consequences. The internet does not easily forget!

It is for all intents and purposes, a permanent record and so mistakes can prove costly. You must be careful and always consider what you publish online.

A useful tool to help you do this is remember the '3 Ws' before posting:

- **Who?** – Think about who is reading your message and how they might perceive what you're sharing or saying. Put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself if an individual or group might interpret the message the wrong way, or be insulted.
- **What?** – Post accurately and correctly. Read every message twice.
- **When?** – When in doubt, leave it out. If you're unsure about any message, that is usually a good sign that you should err on the side of caution and refrain from posting.

To avoid negative situations, often organisations in the form of clubs and event organisers will implement social media policies which athletes are bound to follow. The IOC implements a specific social media policy during Games time. You may also want to check whether other organisations to which you are affiliated have their own social media policies such as your NOC, sponsors or International Federation.

Continuous attention

Although one of the major benefits of social media is that it doesn't require a lot of time, it still requires small amounts of time regularly. Sometimes a lack of activity can be perceived with greater negativity than having no presence at all. So be aware of the time commitment each platform demands.

Direct criticism

Once again, while social media allows you to connect directly with audiences, there is a potential downside to this; you might face criticism and negative attention. This may lead you to issue a knee-jerk response, which often causes poor judgement and regretful mistakes, sure to be picked up by the media.

The enormous benefits of social media are clear to everyone, especially when you consider how it overcomes the shortfalls of traditional media. However, it needs to be treated with care. It can take significant effort and energy to build a successful social media strategy, yet only an instant to bring one down. Recognising the risks and challenges involved is essential in using social media to achieve your goals.

DEVELOPING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Before starting an account, you should build a social media strategy. Here are some hints :

1. What are your objectives?

Is it to gain sponsors? To secure a job in sports media? Or perhaps to enhance your prospects as a coach or technical expert? This will help you choose the content you publish, how you frame this content and the tone. You may have a few different objectives, which is of course fine, but they should all be clear in your mind.

2. Who is your target audience?

This will be dictated by the objectives set out above. If you take the example of an athlete looking to become a media personality, they should target individuals within the sports media, follow these individuals on social media platforms and actively seek to engage them at every opportunity.

3. What is your brand personality?

Decide the type of persona you want to portray in your profile. This should clearly speak to your target audience and be in line with your objectives. If your objective is to promote a charitable cause, a controversial tone may not be the best approach, for example.

4. How much time do you have?

You may have different time resources depending on your own personal circumstances. Often athletes may find they have lots of free time but only for short periods. Different platforms and different types of content require different time commitments and therefore, be clear with the

time you have available when setting out your strategy.

5. What platform will you use?

Again this should be influenced largely by your sought-after objectives. It should also involve deciding how much time you are realistically able and willing to spend on social media and choosing the appropriate platforms to match this. Twitter will require less time per interaction than Facebook for example, but may require more frequent interaction. It is important to be aware that platforms are constantly changing with new social media trends coming and going all the time. It is therefore important to always do some basic research before embarking on your social media campaign.

6. What content will you share?

Once you know your time resources and platforms, you can plan out when and what to communicate. A content calendar really helps. It maps out events and information in the future, so you can plan what to post.

7. How will you monitor impact?

Tracking the impact of your strategy allows you to measure its success, and to make changes and alterations as you go.

Once you have established your social media strategy, your primary goal should be to build an appropriate presence. “Appropriate” means delivering relevant content to your stated audience that is suitably aligned with your strategy.

MONITORING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

There is an element of management involved in using social media. As always, good management will generally produce good results. But what constitutes good results? What does success on social media look like?

Generally speaking, the most basic element of success on social media comes in the form of “presence”. This is a loose hybrid of the number of people following you, the amount of content that you publish and the level in which your followers engage with this content.

You could picture this along the lines of the following equation:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Social media presence} \\
 = \\
 \text{Amount of relevant content published} \\
 + \\
 \text{Proportion of target reached} \\
 + \\
 \text{Level of meaningful engagement}
 \end{array}$$

Here are some hints for building a suitable presence:

1. Create a profile

When starting off, make sure your profile is aligned to the image you want to project to your audience. Does it align with your strategic objectives? If you already have a profile, it may be necessary to make some changes. Try to ensure that your handle or account name ties in closely with your actual name, so people can search for you. Make sure it’s clear that your account is authentic and that it is actually you. This is especially important for targeting fans or sponsors

2. Use tags

This means selectively using words and phrases in your communication that means something to your target audience. These can even be invisible such as when they are written into website code by developers. Today, they have become very user-friendly. The most visible example of this is a hashtag.



A hashtag is simply the symbol “#” placed alongside a word or phrase. Hashtags are used across multiple platforms such as Twitter and Instagram to identify trends and conversation topics. By using keywords intelligently and “tagging” them where appropriate, you can make sure your content is more accessible to those who want to consume it.

3. Be consistent

Make sure your online personality is stable. People should know what they are getting from you. Building a brand personality means that the tone and form of content should generally remain the same. Even if you want to be seen as being an unpredictable character, it is still important to be consistently unpredictable!

4. Engage

This is really what social media is all about. You are more likely to succeed if you engage directly with your audience. Some platforms even prioritise the accounts of users that have higher levels of engagement, such as Twitter, for example. Responding to other users’ posts and publishing posts that ask open questions of the audience, and inviting them to respond are two simple ways of engagement. Other forms of activities that have been used to boost engagement are Question and Answer sessions over social media. This assumes a large and interested audience and may not be for everyone. Generally speaking however, a strategy inviting people to make direct contact with you is a positive way to drive engagement and boost your social media presence.

5. Time your posts

The timing of posts can influence the amount of people who will see it. Studies have shown that people are most active on their social networks at lunchtime during the week and between about 10am and 4pm on the weekend. So if you post during these hours, it is more likely that your posts will get seen. Similarly, it is important to remember while it is lunchtime in one part of the world, another part of the world may be asleep.

6. Tell people

You should use any opportunity to lead your target audience to your social media profiles. This could be as simple as including your account address on your business card or on any presentations that you make.

7. Be yourself

This is an easy one. At the end of the day, the easiest personality and views to express are those that you already have. People respond to people they perceive as being true to their values and honest in their expression.

So once you have established your strategy and are clear in what you are trying to achieve, how do you actually go about measuring this?

Given that social media is still in its infancy, this is more or less restricted to simple numbers. Specifically this means the numeric measurement of size and influence of your social media activity. These numeric measurements are known as “metrics”.

A successful strategy is not necessarily about reaching the greatest number of people, but getting your audience to engage with you - to talk back, like what you post, and participate. While the measurement of success is still growing, the metrics in these areas are already well developed. This is where measurement of success is currently at right now.

The basics

Most platforms have straightforward ways of determining how many people are interested in you; as followers, likes or other simple measurements. Often users are made aware of how many of these they achieve by simply viewing their profile. While these figures do not tell the whole story, they provide a broad indication of how many people are connecting with you and your content. This can be an effective way of keeping track of your social media success, especially for those who don't want to spend too much time.

Platform analytics

Most social media platforms offer an additional method of numerical analysis or "analytics". These analytical features allow you to delve deeper into the basic numeric measurements described above. Twitter, for example, offers its own free portal that allows you to track your tweets, engagement rate and number of followers amongst others. It also allows you to view historical information on all these values and identify trends. This can be especially helpful when you want to figure out what type of content gets you the most views, engagement, retweets etc. These features are shared by other analytics platforms such as Facebook Insights and Google Analytics, for instance. This software is gen-

erally free. They take some learning and getting used to but are generally very accessible and user-friendly.

Third-party applications

There are a number of third party applications that you can use to track your social media progress and success. These frequently contain some free features as well as others for which you have to pay a fee. There is a huge amount on offer out there and the applications are constantly being added to, replaced and updated. They each offer something different or additional to the analytics of the social media platforms themselves. Some of these aggregate more than one platform in a single place or can track the sentiment of your posts and followers.

These are the applications we recommend you use to monitor your social media activity.

Platform	Possible measurement tool
	Facebook Insights
	Twitter Analytics
	SimplyMeasured (third party application)
	YouTube Analytics
	Google Analytics (third party application)
	Pinterest Analytics

CONNECTING TO THE IOC VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

The International Olympic Committee has embraced social media. We now share content with Olympic fans around the world. And we have created a special social media hub for Olympic athletes, so that fans can easily keep track of their heroes.

You can follow the IOC here:

Facebook

facebook.com/olympics

Twitter

twitter.com/Olympics

YouTube

youtube.com/user/olympic

The Athletes' Hub

hub.olympic.org

The Athletes' Hub is a platform tailored for athletes, where you can find information related to your career, on and off the field of play. It covers a wide range of topics, including anti-doping, prevention of injury and illness, prevention of harassment and abuse in sport, match-fixing and illegal/irregular betting, and your entourage. Registered Olympians will gain access to special offers and promotions, such as discounts and exclusive job postings.

On the Athletes' Hub you can also explore verified social media profiles of fellow athletes, and get in touch with them via a messaging function.

SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE OLYMPIC GAMES

The Olympic Games present a unique occasion for you to further build your social media profile. As the world is watching, the interest of fans, the media and sponsors is at an all-time high.

We actively encourage and support athletes and other accredited people to take part in social media and share their Olympic experiences. Such activity, however, must respect the Olympic Charter, and therefore we have set guidelines for social media use during the Games.

Before competing in the Olympic Games, please take a look at the [IOC's Social Media, Blogging and Internet Guidelines](#).

You should be aware that other event organisers, NOCs and the International Federations and sponsors may also have guidelines in place. So be sure to check before you use social media when competing in any event.

Ideas for further resources and help

- Check out the IOC Athlete Learning Gateway Course '[Sports Media – Creating your Winning Profile](#)'. In particular the lecture entitled '[Managing your Media 2 – Using Social Media](#)'.
- Follow fellow athletes or personalities on social media to see what they do.
- Discover different social media platforms and explore what kind of content is best for each of them.
- Read articles focused on social media strategies and tools.



WORKSHEET - LIFE SKILLS 1

Media preparation - Part 1

When you are likely to meet with the media in the mixed zone or at an event take a few moments to consider the following questions. If you are actually being formally interviewed see also the [Worksheet on Media preparation - part 2](#).

Start by writing your answers in the space provided. As you practice and become more experienced the following questions will just prompt you to think about brief media questions in advance.

Who am I meeting with?

Who do I want to reach?

Think about talking to those people directly when answering the questions.

What do they know or think? Are they familiar with my sport? Do I know them already?

If a journalist is familiar with your sport you can respond to questions in a more technical way. If not, it is best to keep it simple and non-technical.

WORKSHEET - LIFE SKILLS 1

What are the likely questions? Is my sport, team or country facing any issues?

If yes, ask for help or direction on how to respond to questions on that topic, for example your team manager.

What is the main message I want to get across?

Think about this in advance.

Media preparation - Part 2

Use the following worksheet to prepare for a media interview and for media questions in general.

Who is my audience?

Knowing your audience is key to developing the right messages – you will speak to children in a much different way and about different things than you will when speaking to dignitaries or other elite athletes.

What are my key points?

Considering your audience and the environment you are speaking in, ask yourself what the three most important things you want to convey are. What do you want the audience/media to take away from your remarks?

How do these points relate to my sport?

Make the connection between your main points and your career in sport. The audience wants to hear about your background and your experiences, so connect that to your broader message.

WORKSHEET - LIFE SKILLS 2

What's my body language saying?

Be sure that the way you present yourself physically supports the messages you want to convey. If you are speaking to dignitaries about the ability of sports to impact international relations, you want to be sure to stand tall, use confident hand gestures and dress professionally. Remember, everything you do sends a message.

Have I rehearsed enough?

Depending on your natural abilities as a speaker or presenter, you want to make sure you have practiced your remarks enough to feel confident making them. Never go to an appearance unprepared, especially if you are new to public appearances. Being uncomfortable will reflect in your presentation and could affect the image others have of you, which could affect your chances of being invited back to appear at other events.

Creating your story

The following worksheet will assist you to prepare your own story. By answering the questions in the worksheet you will already have developed the main basis for the presentation.

Before starting, consider what the presentation is about and who your target audience is. If you are speaking with children you will tell a different story and use different language than if you are addressing a business forum. Have this in mind and visualise yourself giving the presentation. You will immediately be able to gauge if the story is appropriate for the audience.

What is your story!

Assume you are presenting to a class of young students who want to hear how you become an athlete. What is your story:

Initial problem:

(I was once like you and I sat in a class similar to yours, and I dreamt of being an athlete.)

WORKSHEET - LIFE SKILLS 3

Search for the solution:

(Whilst in the park training ... I met a lady who was also runningshe introduced me to my first coach.)

Problem two:

(I never really believed I could make it.)

Search for the solution:

(Until I won my first national championship....)

Compelling idea:

(Belief in yourself...)

WORKSHEET - LIFE SKILLS 4

You try it!

The following Worksheet is designed to help you to think about the rhythm and progression of the presentation. Watch some presentations from YouTube or TED Talks take notes and see if you can fill in the grid.

	start	middle	end
Logical flow			
Rhythm of the speaker			
Highlights			
What did you remember? Do you think this was the key message? Why or why not?			

Once you have done this a few times you will start to have a feel for what works and what doesn't. Then start to prepare your own presentation in accordance with the grid.

WORKSHEET - LIFE SKILLS 5

Presentation equipment checklist

The following checklist will assist you to ensure that you are organised and stay relaxed before a presentation. Also remember to arrive with time to spare in order to deal with any unforeseen technical or other issues.

Checklist of equipment testing :

- Computer has PowerPoint or other presentation software.
- Have the power cable.
- If travelling, check that the power cable works or arrange an adaptor.
- Take a back up of the presentation on a USB stick.
- Ensure that any links (e.g. videos) are also saved to the USB stick.
- Test any hand held clickers, the white board markers (if needed) etc.
- Print at least one copy of the presentation, in case the technology fails, you can still deliver the presentation.
- Arrive 30 minutes early to set up and test the equipment.
- Ask what happens after the presentation, is another presenter speaking? Do you hand back to the moderator? Don't leave yourself looking confused, organise what happens next.
- Take some give-aways or photos so that you can give autographs.
- Other

Conducting a SWOT Analysis

The following worksheet should be used to prepare your own personal SWOT analysis. SWOT refers to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>What I do well?</p> <p>What are my assets?</p> <p>What great resource do I have?</p> <p>What are my advantages?</p> <p>What are my unique selling points?</p>	<p>What could I do better?</p> <p>Where am I vulnerable?</p> <p>What disadvantages do I have?</p> <p>What is my reputation like?</p> <p>How strong is my network and support?</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Which of my strengths are unique and can I turn it into an opportunity?</p> <p>Which of my weaknesses can I work on to become an opportunity?</p> <p>Are any of my threats also an opportunity?</p> <p>Are there any current trends that I can turn into an opportunity?</p>	<p>What factors outside of your control can be a threat to you? e.g. economic downturn.</p> <p>What obstacles can stop me from achieving what I want?</p> <p>Threats can also be competitors to the same position.</p> <p>Can any of your weaknesses seriously threaten you?</p>

Creating a 30-second Elevator Speech

What it is – A 30-second elevator speech is a short ‘pitch’ or sound-bite designed to pique the interest of a group, company or individual. It is a brief description of yourself, the skills and experience you offer, and any special or unique information related to your interests which can be expressed easily in 30 seconds, the amount of time you would have if you were on an elevator with someone.

It is not a life story. Your goal is to get your audience to ask additional questions, look at (and not just file) your resume, or take a general interest in learning more about you.

Why it is important in networking – The market for the most desirable jobs, social positions, educational institutions and teams is competitive. For example, all job seekers at a career fair will have a resume, a suit, a business card and an interest in securing multiple interviews. The ‘30-second Elevator Pitch’ is an opportunity for you to quickly and succinctly highlight particular skills or characteristics that are interesting and help you stand out. It’s all about gaining a competitive advantage.

What it should include – The pitch should demonstrate how you are unique. It should include a brief introduction and what you can offer the group, sponsor or company. The best pitches contain two or three important skills or abilities related to the group you are speaking to, backed up by illustrative examples.

What it should sound like – Imagine you were interested in becoming a coach after your playing career. At a sports conference, you meet a very successful coach. Your 30-second elevator speech may sound something like this:

Example:

“My ultimate career goal is to become a professional coach. Having led my team to two national championships and representing my country at the Olympic Games, I have developed strong leadership skills and international experience that I can apply to coaching professional athletes. I am interested in exploring coaching opportunities and I am wondering what type of training opportunities or assistant-level positions may currently exist.”

This brief speech states a clear goal, examples of your suitability, unique skills and experiences and offers the listener the opportunity to respond with additional questions or ideas to consider. The elevator speech is a ‘first-step’ and can get conversations moving in your favour.