



PC#10

# Practice Challenge #10

---

Assisted (and Dynamic) Imagery

# Practice Challenge #10

## Assisted (and Dynamic) Imagery

Even as you practice increasing the vividness of your imagery, and save and review your best takes, there may still be times where it's difficult to imagine hearing or feeling yourself play exactly the way you want.

You might still feel yourself missing a shift, or hear a note crack, or notice intonation issues in your imagined version of a piece.

If that's the case, there are a couple additional imagery practice strategies you can add to your imagery toolbox.

### **Assisted imagery**

The first one doesn't have a formal name (that I'm aware of anyway), but it's something my Mom made me do a lot of as a child - pretty much every time I was in the car, driving to lessons, school, the grocery store, etc.

I think of it as "assisted" imagery. Because the idea is to put on a recording that comes close to your ideal performance, and listen to the recording while visualizing yourself playing. This way you don't have to spend as much of your brainpower creating the sound, and can devote more of your attention to the kinesthetic aspect of imagery - like the feel the instrument under your hands, the response of the keys under your fingers, your breathing, and so on.

And because the sound you're hearing from the recording is close to your ideal, it'll help you start associating the kinesthetic feeling of you playing your instrument, with great sound, rhythm, and intonation.

### **Developing a clear model**

I always felt like this was a really helpful way to develop a clear model of what a great performance sounds and feels like. Your mileage may vary of course, but over time, assisted visualization made me feel like this level of performance was possible for me. That I too could play as beautifully as the performer on the recording. I mean, I could hear it in my head, and I could feel it in my hands and fingers as well. And although none of us are going to sound *exactly* like Heifetz or Horowitz, I do think this can help us get closer than we might otherwise.

So the goal of this practice challenge is to practice stepping "into the shoes" of your best self, and experiencing a great performance even before you give it.



## What you'll need

- A short challenging passage that you're working on
- A favorite audio or video recording of the passage you selected
- A recording device
- Assisted Imagery Worksheet



## Where to begin

### STEP 1: Visualize the passage

- Select a passage that's causing you a bit of trouble – and that is also difficult for you to visualize playing successfully. Where there may be an intonation issue for instance, or difficulty getting some of the notes to speak just right.
- Take a moment to try to visualize the passage, in your mind, exactly as you'd like it to sound.

### STEP 2: Rate & reflect

On the Assisted Imagery Worksheet, give your mental performance a score from 1-10, where 1=Sounds Awful, and 10=Sounds Awesome!

### STEP 3: Make a BEFORE recording

Now, press record on your recording device, and record yourself *actually* playing the passage (you'll refer back to this recording at the end of this challenge, so save it somewhere easy to find).

### STEP 4: Rate & reflect

Then, take a moment to give your actual performance a score on the same 1-10 scale too.

### STEP 5: Find a recording you like

If you don't already have a favorite recording of this piece, take maybe 5-10 minutes to find one that you like on YouTube. You don't have to listen to the whole piece, just the passage that you've selected for this week's challenge.

### STEP 6: Listen, visualize, and repeat

- Once you find a recording you like, cue it up to the beginning of the passage that you recorded in STEP 1, and listen back.
- As you listen to the recording, close your eyes, and imagine yourself performing the piece, and hearing these sounds coming out of your instrument. Make the kinesthetic elements of the performance as clear as you can – imagine how the instrument feels under your hands, your breath support, how your weight sinks into keys, how light and quick your fingers feel, and how effortless it is to play in tune, producing the sound that you hear coming out of the speakers or headphones of your device.
- Spend a few minutes replaying the passage and visualizing it. Then, turn off the recording, and try to visualize the passage completely on your own. Does it seem any clearer, or easier to visualize?

Pages 4 & 5 have been omitted from this sample.

# Assisted Imagery Worksheet

Piece/Excerpt: \_\_\_\_\_

## BEFORE

<b>Visualized performance</b> <i>(1=Awful; 10=Awesome!)</i>	<b>Observations</b> <i>e.g. missed the big shift, the chords were out of tune, string crossings were sloppy</i>
--	--

6      *Pretty good except for some intonation issues, and left hand felt tight even in my visualization.*

---



---

<b>Actual performance</b> <i>(1=Awful; 10=Awesome!)</i>	<b>Observations</b> <i>e.g. missed the big shift, the chords were out of tune, string crossings were sloppy</i>
--	--

---



---

## AFTER

<b>Visualized performance</b> <i>(1=Awful; 10=Awesome!)</i>	<b>Observations</b> <i>e.g. missed the big shift, the chords were out of tune, string crossings were sloppy</i>
--	--

8      *Better - most of the intonation issues were improved, and left hand felt looser, more at ease.*

---



---

<b>Actual performance</b> <i>(1=Awful; 10=Awesome!)</i>	<b>Observations</b> <i>What feels or sounds different relative to the BEFORE version?</i>
--	--

---



---