

# 5 TIPS TO OVERCOME PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN BOXING

BY **BOBBY MAYNE** - June 17, 2019



*How to deal with ring performance anxiety | Pic: Bobby Mayne/Boxrite*

Recently, I received correspondence from a young boxer. He is having difficulty applying the skills developed in the gym to sparring and competition, due to excessive nerves and anxiety prior to stepping into the ring.

This feeling of anxiety is caused by adrenaline being produced in the body by the adrenal glands. It plays an important role in the fight-or-flight response from perceived threats by increasing blood flow to muscles, maximizing output of the heart, pupil dilation response, and spike in blood sugar level.

This energy or adrenaline rush heightens our state of alertness along with improving reaction time to either escape from a threat or fight back. The downside effects are that the body is being fatigued and lethargic accompanied with a feeling of nausea when this rush wears off.

The following steps can assist overcoming anxiety before **sparring sessions** and competition. This takes time depending on the boxer's ability, development of skillset and demonstrated self-confidence.

## How to deal with ring performance anxiety

1. Partner drills
2. Technical sparring
3. Conditional sparring
4. Focus mitt training
5. Interclub sparring

### 1. Partner drills

Partner drills are self-paced drills set by the coach, assisting the boxer to focus on the partner facing them and develop skills and self-confidence in anticipating and reacting to oncoming punches.

## 2. Technical sparring

Technical sparring are pre-set sparring drills with the objective of developing technique and improving reaction time, not endurance or punching power. This training perfects technique without pressure and assists the boxer in reading an oncoming punch without panicking.

## 3. Conditional sparring

Conditional sparring is set conditions boxers undertake in the ring with coaching supervision. These conditions comprise of realistic scenarios for developing skills and tactical awareness specific to competition. Pace should be faster than technical sparring with much control on the intensity of punches.

## 4. Focus mitt training

Focus mitt training not only teaches the boxer to hold the focus mitts correctly, not only assisting a training partner improving timing, offensive and defensive skillsets, but also detecting and rectifying technical mistakes. Focus mitt work should simulate sparring and the skills of identifying mistakes and habits to assist in sparring when anticipating a sparring partner's attack.

## 5. Interclub sparring

Interclub sparring is the final step in the progression of a boxer's development when preparing for a bout and overcome performance anxiety by sparring boxers from different gyms in unfamiliar surroundings with strangers looking on. These sparring sessions are a great litmus test in the development of a boxer and an indicator to coaching staff of the boxer's performance under pressure.

The boxer has to trust the judgment, advice and reassurance given by the coach. This enables the boxer to focus attention on the sparring partner, shutting out the spectators and accompanying noise assisting in recognising the coach's voice and instructions. This is realistic preparation for competition.

Coaching prompts should be basic reminders, such as reminding the boxer to maintain head movement to slip punches to close range or keep gloves high for maintaining an effective guard. Applying these five steps under your coaching staff supervision can assist in overcoming anxiety and improving performance in the ring.

You may also like: [Muay Thai Payback and how to stay calm in a fight.](#)

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Bobby Mayne is the Head Coach at Boxrite Boxing Club and author of several boxing coaching books including the bestselling "The Art of Boxing: Your Guide to the Sweet Science". Mayne has been involved in boxing since 1981. He has trained professional boxers such as Australian Daniel Dawson to compete at the world level, becoming a world contender and ultimately the WBF World Superwelterweight Champion. He also assisted in the training of top boxers from the Philippines including Rey Megrino and Rey Loreto, who were both successful in winning their respective WBC Regional and WBO World Flyweight titles.

