

Concentration model

Concentration is about focussing all your attention on those things which are relevant to whatever it is you are doing. It is universally agreed that to achieve in sport, performers need good concentration skills but good concentration is not about trying harder – in fact, peak performers are often accompanied by a state of relaxed or effortless concentration. Where should their attention be focused? Which cues are relevant at any particular time? Although every sport has unique cues, there are some common denominators and it is helpful to analyse the attentional demands of a sport by considering a model (Nideffer, 1976) depicting two dimensions:

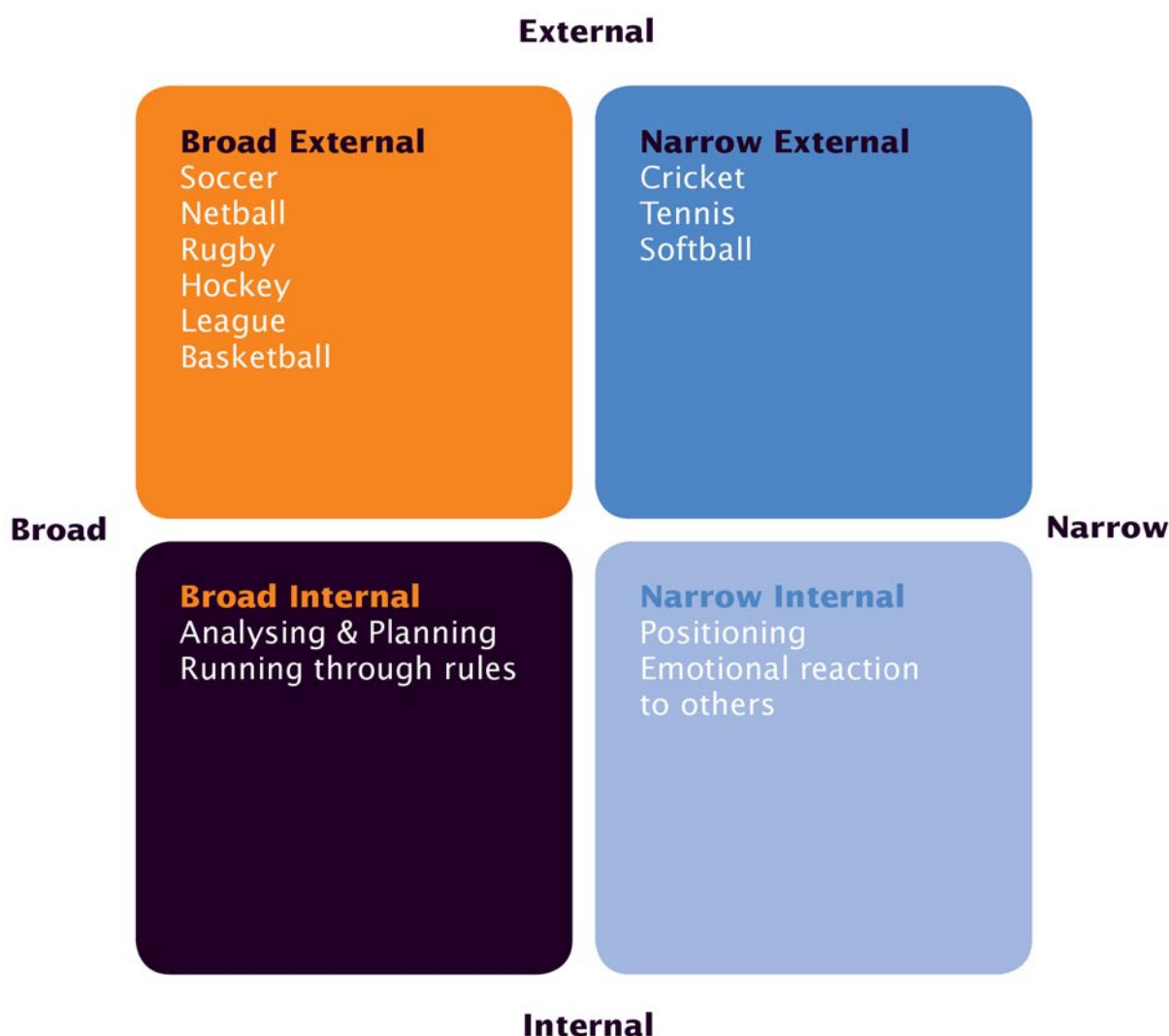
The **width** of attention – whether attention is broad or narrow, the number of cues to which the performer should attend. A very broad focus of attention may be required for certain sports, such as rugby where the field of play, number of players, and positioning issues are all large requiring a wide focus. A narrower focus is preferred when officiating a cricket or tennis match because it forces concentration on a limited number of important cues.

The **direction** of attention – whether attention is directed outwards at the events happening in the external environment or internally focused on the official's thoughts and feelings. An external focus is frequently needed to concentrate on the position or movement of players or an external object such as a ball or piece of equipment. An internal focus is necessary when there is a need to analyse what is happening, plan a response or consult on an issue with other officials.

The ability to gain the right attentional focus is crucial and so too is the ability to switch from one type of attention to another. Some sports make greater demands on certain types of attentional focus and more critically on the need to switch frequently and quickly from one to the other. The skill in creating and maintaining a particular focus and indeed of switching effortlessly varies from one official to another.

The diagram below will help you to consider when each might be important in your sport.

Concentration Model



You use a **broad-external** focus of attention to rapidly assess surroundings. It is this type of concentration that allows experienced officials to anticipate and instinctively react to what is in front of them and be at the right place at the right time. This style can be used to read the nonverbal behaviors of others. This lets them anticipate objections and reactions.

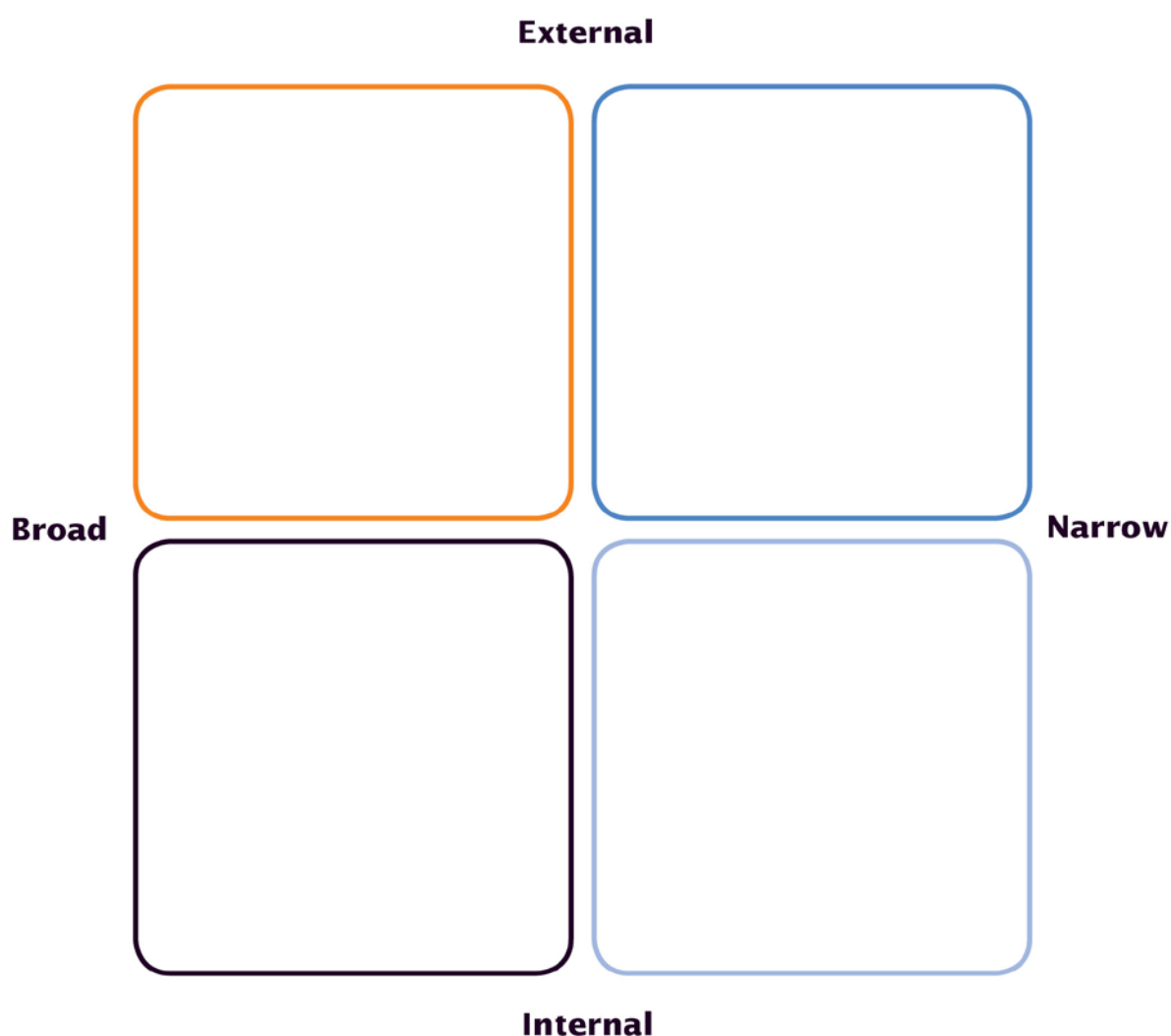
You use a **broad-internal** focus of attention to analyse and plan. It is this type of concentration that leads to creative problem solving, to the development of long-range goals and game plans, and to the ability to organise thoughts on the rules and laws of the game. It is your analytical ability which allows you to learn from the past, and to use that information to anticipate and predict the future.

You use a **narrow-internal** focus to systematically rehearse and problem solve. The mental rehearsal of a performance sequence like hitting a golf ball, or delivering a response to a players or coaches query, requires a **narrow-internal** focus of concentration.

You use a **narrow-external** to focus your attention and avoid distraction at a critical time. You need to narrow external focus to successfully officiate sports such as cricket, tennis, and softball.

Activity

Based on the sport you officiate, allocate the amount of time during a game that you think you spend in each quadrant. Are you strong in the quadrant in which you spend most of your time?



Rate the importance of each quadrant for officiating your sport from **1 Not Important** to **5 Highly Important**.

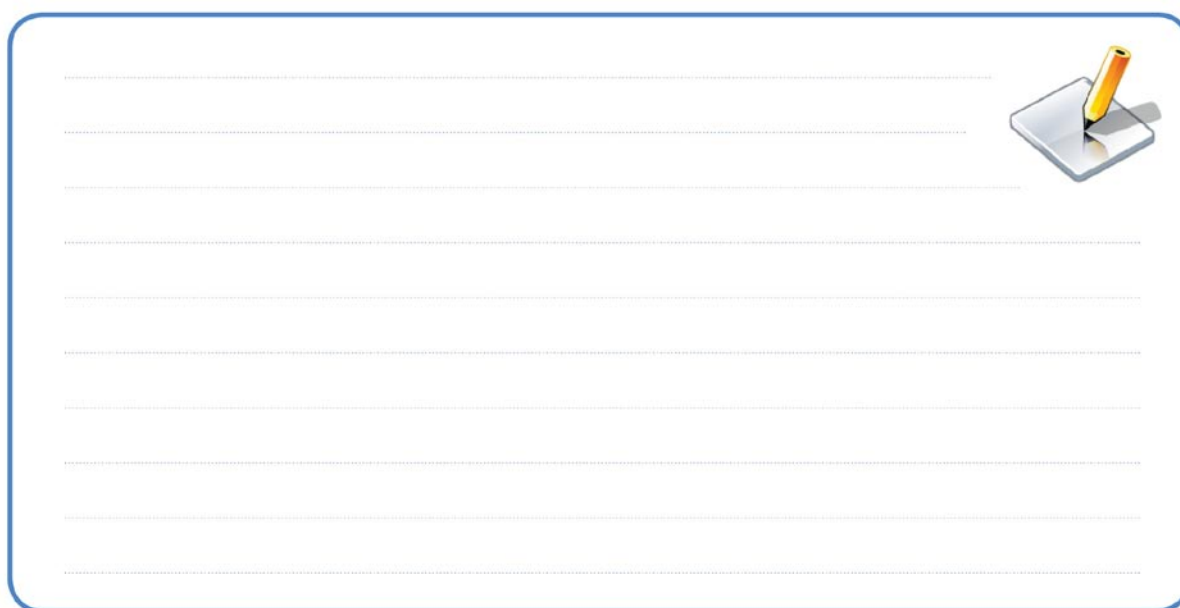
Broad-External

Broad-Internal

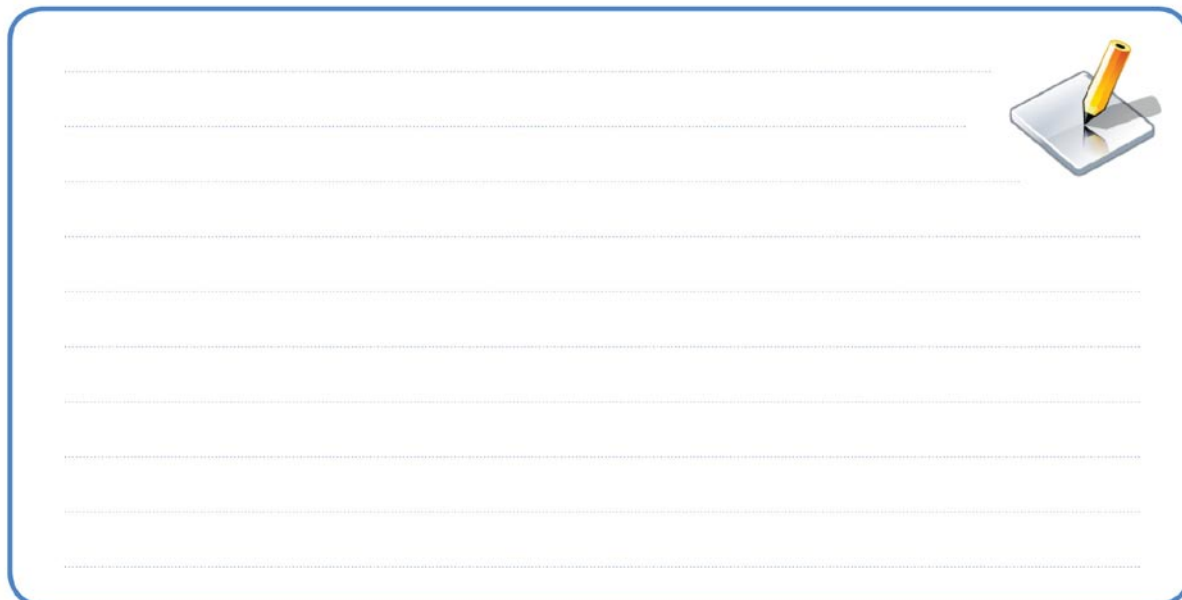
Narrow-Internal

Narrow-External

What quadrant are you the strongest in?



What quadrant do you have the most room for improvement. What can you do to improve in this area?



A large blue-bordered box containing horizontal lines for writing. In the top right corner of the box is a small icon of a yellow pencil resting on a silver notepad.