

# GOAL SETTING

## Your Road Map to Success



### GOAL SETTING - Your Road Map to Success

“Excuse me, Sir,” Alice inquires. “Could you tell me which road to take?” Wisely, the caterpillar asks, “Where are you going?” Somewhat dismayed, Alice responds, “Oh, I don’t know where I am going, Sir.” “Well”, replied the caterpillar, “if you don’t know where you are going, it really doesn’t matter which road you take.”

(Alice in Wonderland - Lewis Carrol)

### Let’s Take a Road Trip

*Goal setting CAN help in the pursuit for the final destination.*

Before we go anywhere, a little planning needs to be done. Where do we want to go? Let’s drive from Piedmont to Colorado Springs. How are we going to get there? Let’s drive! What supplies are we going to need? Sunglasses, some money, snacks for the trip, Ipad, books, ....

But, don’t forget the map. The easiest way to plan for a trip is with a road map. When using a road map you are in essence setting goals for the trip. The road map can:

- locate specifically where it is you’re going (long term goal)

- determine how many planned stops to take along the way (short term goal)
- tell you how many miles to the next destination (daily goal)
- tell you the alternate routes along the way, and
- help locate tourist stops en route (you should always enjoy the journey□).

Now, let's apply this to swimming. Similar questions should be asked of swimmers before they take off on an athletic journey. Where will they want to be at the end of the season? What are they going to do physically and mentally in order to get there? What skills and tools do they need in order to reach their destination?

### How Exactly Does Goal Setting Help?

Good goal setting gives an athlete an edge in three areas:

1. Goals provide **direction**.
2. Goals provide **feedback**.
3. Goals **motivate**, provide a daily purpose.

### Basic Tips for Effective Goal Setting

- Identify both Short-term and Long-term goals.
- Identify task goals in addition to outcome goals.
- Take action
- Evaluate your goals

Let's look at each of these in more details...

### How Far Ahead Should an Athlete Look?

*Effective goal setting entails setting long-term and short-term goals; these goals will identify where the athlete is going and how they are going to get there.*

When planning a vacation, you often think about dream destinations. Where would you go if you had unlimited funds and abilities. Egypt, the Caribbean, Europe? As with traveling and many other aspects of life it is fun to dream. In sport, it is also fun and important to dream.

**Dream Goals** allow you to project years into the future without any limits. For example, for many athletes making the Olympic Team is a dream goal.

Athletes need to progress from a dream goal to a long-term goal. **Long-term goals** are typically one season to numerous seasons down the road; as in the road trip analogy, this goal is the destination. One way to determine a good long-term goal would be to have swimmers ask themselves the question “where do I want to be at the end of the season or the end of middle school, high school or college?” Examples of the answer to this question can be in terms of having an improved streamline by the end of the season, a goal time, making a specific time standard, or earning a spot on a junior or senior national team.

In order to make the long-term goal seem less daunting, **short-term goals** are set. **Short-term goals** are set for a shorter lengths of time than long-term goals, usually between two weeks and a month. Short-term goals serve as stepping-stones for the long-term goals. Setting short-term goals allow one to monitor success towards the long-term goals. A good question to have swimmers ask themselves is “Where do I want to be at the end of this month?”

Finally, short-term goals can also often feel far off therefore something more within reach is needed to maintain focus and motivation. For these reasons it is also important to set **daily goals**. **Daily goals** are to be set every day in practice and in competition. Setting effective daily goals will help motivate and bring higher intensity to training. Daily goals can be set for both physical training and psychological skill development. A good question for swimmers to ask themselves is “why am I getting in the water today?”

### **Identify Outcome Goals and Task Goals**

*Effective goal setting necessitates that athletes set both outcome and task goals.*

Most swimmers are good at setting outcome goals; an **outcome goal** is any type of goal directed at the end result. Swimming outcome goals are set when an individual focuses on attaining a specific place at a meet, achieving a time standard or a personal best, or beating a teammate in practice. Outcome goals are hard to control because they depend on both the ability and skill of the swimmer and his opponents.

However, the swimmer has more control over **task goals** because they depend on their skill and ability only. **Task goals** are what the swimmer has to DO (physically and mentally) in order to accomplish their outcome goal. Examples of task goals include being aggressive in and out of each turn, holding a specific stroke count and maintaining splits through an event.

Last year, Jason placed second at Regionals in both the 100 and 200m fly. Regionals will start in 2 days and all Jason is talking about is winning both the events. He says, “Nothing but first will be good enough.” Because such a goal is out of his control, it would be more effective to focus on what he needs to do to win the events. He needs to focus on powerful start, control through 75, then working his kick. If he can do this, the outcome will take care of itself.

### **Taking Action**

*Effective goal setting must involve not just a road map but a strategy to keep the goals “real” on a consistent basis.*

Without much, if any, prodding from coaches, swimmers are already setting goals (especially outcome goals). When asked, athletes talk about goals such as wanting to swim a certain time, making cuts, improving a specific aspect of their stroke, and staying streamlined of the walls. Coaches and swimmers need to work together to actually act on the swimmers long-term and short-term goals.

Once a goal setting “map” has been established, the next critical piece is to keep the athlete accountable to these goals. Doing this is largely a matter of creativity and finding a means of accountability that will work for the athletes. Some examples of ways to keep goals at the forefront so they are acted upon include:

- Complete weekly goal setting forms
- Developing a goal chart
- Write goals on visible items such as water bottles or caps
- Verbalize goals to teammates, friends, family

## Evaluate your Goals

*Effective goal setting requires athletes to regularly evaluate progress towards their goals, note success along the way, and modify goals if necessary.*

Let's go back to the road map analogy, where the goal is to drive from Piedmont to Colorado Springs. Suppose you take off bright and early in the morning with your trusty roadmap in hand. On day one, your goal is to make it to Salt Lake City by sundown. However, outside of Reno there was an accident and you end up sitting on the interstate for multiple hours. At what point, if ever, will you stop to assess your progress and re-evaluate your goals?

Back in the pool, Rachel, the star distance freestyler on the team, developed a shoulder problem and only kicked for the month of September. At what point should she reassess her goal of improving her stroke rate? Rachel will only be disappointed and frustrated if she only evaluates her training based on her original goal of improving her stroke rate.

Goals are meant to provide direction, give feedback on progress and motivate. To ensure they serve this purpose, goals must also be flexible. It is necessary to evaluate goals at several points during the swim season and make changes if needed.

## Goal Setting Exercises

To help you understand and use goals more often in practice and competition goal setting worksheets and recording sheets have been included. The sheets have been included to get athletes started on effective goal setting.

**Exercises 1** is targeted towards all groups. The main purpose of this exercise is to get the swimmers thinking about short and long-term goals and emphasize how one type of goal influences the other.

**Exercises 3 and 4** are targeted toward Pre-Senior and Seniors; they are designed to bring home differences between short and long term goals and outcome and task goals.

**Exercise 5** can also be used for all groups. Setting and recording daily goals is important. Daily goals can be recorded in any different way. One way of recording daily goals is on a card/sheet.

**Goal Setting Exercise 1 - All Groups**  
**Make Dreams Reality**

Write down your dreams as a swimmer. Then underneath write down four things you can do today in practice to bring you a little closer to your dreams.

My Dreams:

Four Things I can do **Today** to Help Me Reach My **Dreams**:

1.

2.

3.

4.

**Goal Setting Exercise 2 - Pre-Seniors/Seniors:  
How Far should I Look Ahead?**

Long-term goals tell you where you want to go and short-term goals tell you how you are going to get there. Both are important for effective goal setting. Try this exercise to help you breakdown your long-term goals.

**1. What is one of your long-term goals for this season?**

**2. What are the abilities or skills you need to achieve this goal?**

a.

b.

c.

**3. What can you do between now and the end of the season to develop those abilities and skills?**

a.

b.

c.

**4. What will you do this week to develop those abilities and skills?**

a.

b.

c.

**5. What can you do next practice to develop those abilities and skills?**

a.

b.

c.

**Goal Setting Exercise 3 - Pre-Seniors/Seniors:  
Moving Beyond Outcome Goals to Task Goal Setting**

Outcome goals tell you where you want to be which can help motivate. But, on a daily basis, they do not tell you what you need to DO.

**1. Start With an Outcome**

Choose an upcoming meet, and pick a challenging but not impossible outcome goal (win, place, get a certain time, etc). Write that goal down in detail here:

**2. Moving From Outcome to Task Goals**

How can you maximize your chances to achieve this goal? Write down three things (i.e. pacing, stroke count, concentration, good breakfast, plenty of sleep) **you can do at the meet** in order to increase your odds of achieving the outcome goal.

1. I will:

2. I will:

3. I will:

**3. Practicing the Task Goals in Training**

What can you do in practice between now and your competition to increase your chances of achieving your three competition tasks? Write down two things to focus on in practice that will gear you towards your competition task goals.

For example, if your competition task goal is to hold a specific stroke rate, you might focus on specific stroke rating sets in practice.

1. In training, I will:

2. In training I will:



**Goal Setting Exercise 4 - All Groups**  
**Daily Goal Setting Sheet**

My Goal for today:

What do I need to do physically to accomplish my goal?

1.

2.

What do I need to do mentally to accomplish my goal?

1.

2.

## **Keeping Track of Progress**

### **Training Logs**

An important aspect of setting goals is writing them down and making them real. One way to help keep track of goals is by maintaining a training log. This written log of daily activities serves as a way to help maintain a more systematic focus on all aspects of training and competition. Training logs can include information about both physical and mental practice and goals. Benefits from keeping a training log, include developing a better sense of how you spend your practice time, knowing where improvements are coming from, increasing your motivation to keep working, and heightening your awareness at competitions.

On the next page you will find a sample training logbook page. Note that logging will take place both before and after each practice and before and after swim meets.

## Training Log Book

### **Before Practice**

Physical Training Goals:

1.

2.

3.

Mental Training Goals:

1.

2.

3.

### **After Practice Evaluation:**

Physical Training Goals - Accomplishments:

Physical Training Goals - Things to keep working on:

Mental Training Goals - Accomplishments:

Mental Training Goals - Things to keep working on:

## **Competition Logbook**

Date:

Swim Meet:

Event:

Time:

How did you feel?

Coaches' Comments:

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## **Competition Logbook**

Date:

Swim Meet:

Event:

Time:

How did you feel?

Coaches' Comments: