

Goal Setting

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Why set goals?

Goal setting has long been acknowledged as a performance enhancer in the business world (Lee, Locke, & Latham, 1989), and is now a staple of mental training programs for athletes. When used properly, goals influence performance by directing athletes' attention toward relevant tasks, and increasing persistence in the face of obstacles (Gould, 2009).

FACT #1: Research supports the effectiveness of goal setting

Did you know that 80% of studies published through 2007 indicated that goal setting facilitated improved motor performance

FACT #2: Goal setting is a common strategy among the most elite athletes

Did you know that goal setting is one of the most commonly used mental training techniques of Olympic champions)?

What types of goals should athletes set?

There are three main types of goals: (a) process goals, (b) performance goals, and (c) outcome goals. Athletes should use all three to maximize their goal-setting effectiveness.

Process

Process goals focus on learnign the skills and techniques necessary to accomplish a goal.

In basketball, if a player wishes to become a better jump shooter, she or he may have to a process goals of working with a shooting coach for "X" hours per week to evaluate form and taking 100 practice jump shots outside of practice every day. The result of this goal should be to improve shooting percentage from jump shot.

Performance

Performance goals are related to execution during game time.

The basketball player may have a goal to take 10 jump shots in game situations while maintaining her or his target shooting percentage. As the athlete reaches these targets, she or he increases the likelihood of reaching their ultimate outcome goal.

Outcome

Outcome goals are the desired finish line in goal setting.

The basketball player's outcome goal may be to help the team win a conference championship by playing the role of an effective jump shooter.

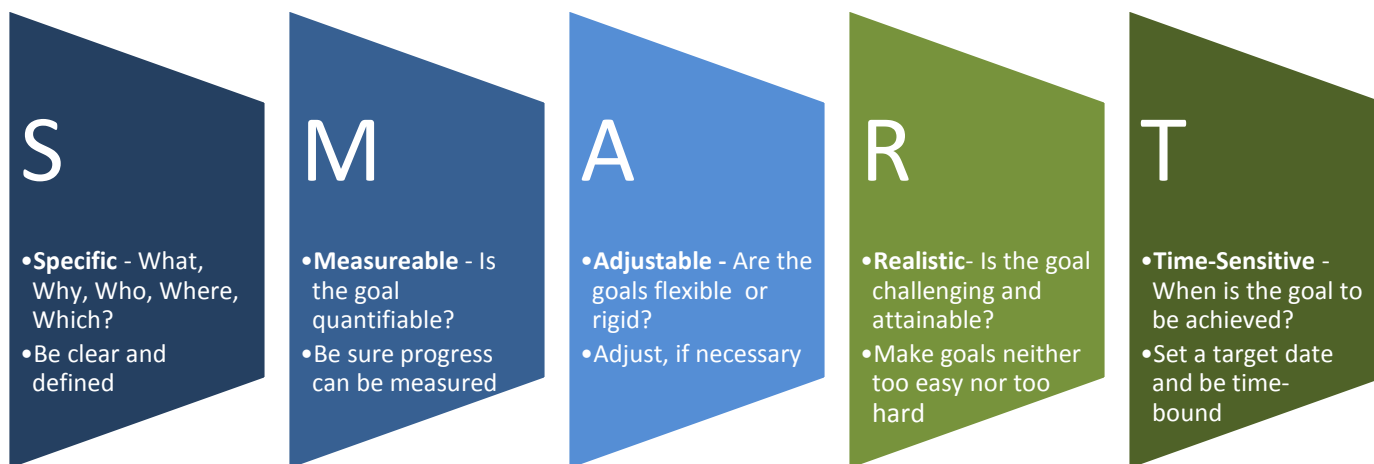


When should athletes use goal setting?

Athletes can set goals at any time and for any purpose (e.g., learning a new skill), but goal setting is particularly useful on certain occasions. First, athletes can work with their coaches and teammates to set both team and individual goals prior to a new season. Pre-season goals can help to focus athletes toward areas for improvement, and create team unity around common objectives. Second, goal setting is critical for maintaining motivation during injury rehabilitation. Athletes should work with their Athletic Trainer to systematically set and track short and long-term milestones marking physical improvements. Whatever the reason for setting goals, they should be personally meaningful. Without a sense of ownership, athletes are less likely to be fully committed to the goal setting process.



What are the important components of effective goals?



Goals should be **monitored and adjusted** when necessary. Athletes may believe that failing to achieve a certain goal means that the entire process has failed. To prevent athletes from abandoning the goal setting process, coaches and sport psychology consultants should make it clear from the beginning that goals are not set in stone, and may be modified over the course of the season. It is helpful to set up **regular goal “checkpoints”** throughout the season to see how athletes are doing, and to make **necessary adjustments**.

Where can I learn more about goal setting?

1. Burton, D., & Weiss, C. (2008). The fundamental goal concept: The path to process and performance success. In T. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in Sport Psychology* (3rd ed.), pp. 339 – 375. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
2. Gould, D. (2009). Goal setting for peak performance. In J. Williams & V. Krane (Eds.), *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal growth to peak performance*, (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
3. Gould, D., Dieffenbach, K., & Moffett, A. (2002). Psychological characteristics and their development in Olympic champions. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 14, 172 – 204. doi: <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/10.1080/10413200290103482>
4. Lee, T. W., Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1989). Goal setting theory and job performance. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Goal Concepts in Personality and Social Psychology*, pp. 291 – 326. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

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