Goal Setting Overview from USA Swimming Presentation

With HEAT guidelines for ultimate success!

**Why make a goal?**

Goals provide direction. They provide important information about how to get what you want. Goals also enhance motivation. They remind you why you are working so hard every day.

**Goals are like a roadmap**

Like a real map, you have a starting point, a route, stops along the way and a final destination. When making a goal or goals you need to have a plan on where you want to go, how you need to get there and where you are now. Once you arrive at a destination you, then, make another goal and follow that journey, constantly moving, learning and enjoying the process of always improving.

**How do I start?**

Start by just participating. Once you get through a few months of practice and some competitions you will then start to see where you would like to go. Talk to your coaches because they can help you with your map. You will need advice on your route and if your destination is an appropriate for a goal for you right now. You can then share these goals with other coaches, family and friends *who are supportive* of your choices so that they can all help keep you accountable and focused in a positive way.

**Create goals in a SMARTER way (an update to the SMART method by coach Will)**

**S** – Specific. They need to include details. “I want to swim fast,” is not specific. Use times to the 100th. If you want places or awards than those are ok goals to write down, as well.

**M** – Measureable. You need to be able to see progress. Whether is a time, a technical change to a stroke or a holding a certain average in a test set you need to see and track progress.

**A** – Attainable. “I want to win a gold medal at the Olympics,” is a great goal, but may not be appropriate if you just started swimming last year. You want attainable goals on your way to the more challenging goal(s) like stops along the way to your destination. This keeps you interested and motivated. Keep everything positive!  
**R** – Realistic. Be careful using this word. This does not mean “limited,” or something you can’t attain. It has three meanings: appropriate at the time (see attainable), real and truthful. You can create ANY goal that you want! Reality is perception. If you listen to the people who think you are wasting your time or effort on something that you will never achieve then you will never get that goal. It only matters what you created with the help of you coaches. In order to keep those goals real they need to be visible and in your focus most of your day. Place the goal sheet in a place you will see every day with your process oriented goals prominent and be honest about what you are doing to get them.  
**T** – Time sensitive. This does not mean we are focused completely on your time. We want to create a sense of urgency, so making a deadline in which you want that goal to occur helps. This is not a gauge of success in and of itself though. It is just an evaluation time.

**E** – Expectations. What effort do you expect to put into your journey? For example: for most swimmers, you cannot expect to get that time, place or gold medal if you only come to practice twice a week and take summers off. Do you know, and are prepared for, the commitment and dedication it is going to require of you? For new swimmers two days a week may be fine. For an experienced national distance swimmer it may take 8-12 practices a week including weights and dryland training. Stay focused on the things you can control!

**R** – Resolve. You are what you habitually do. Don’t just look at them once and put them away. You should always be tweeking the route, taking detours if necessary and maneuvering around uncontrollable obstacles. Never give up the desire to get better and keep learning. For some the journey is quick and for some, they have to work unbelievably hard. Either way, it is:

***YOUR JOURNEY, so enjoy it! No excuses and no regrets!***

**Success is a Journey**

After you decide what you want you need to decide HOW you are going to get it. When you make a goal sheet you will make two kinds of goals: Outcome oriented and performance oriented goals.

The outcome goals are things you can’t control. These are the motivators. There is no limit to these goals. We will figure out a good pathway after you write them down. These include:

A certain place

Awards

Cuts (like time standards ex: National cut, Age group State cut, etc.)

Times (you cannot go up to the clock and manipulate it to what you want, therefore, you cannot control the exact time).

The performance goals are the things you can control. Some feel that the term “performance goals” are reserved for competitions. I would argue that every day in practice you get a chance to perform and push your boundaries. Then, when you get to a meet you get to relax and let it flow and not worry about “performing!” So, when we look at the list of things you can control it is surprisingly long!

*Training* – what you are doing and how often? Water/dryland/weights?

*Practice* – how often are you coming? What sets do you need improvement? Are you working on your weak strokes? Are you focusing on skills to improve your races?

*Competition* – What do you do for pre-race preparations? Physical/Mental/Nutritional?

*Technique* – what do you need to do to improve in all four strokes and underwater?

*Psychology* – are you practicing good mental habits and pushing yourself to new limits?

*Nutrition* – are you eating to fuel, refuel and repair your body for high performance?

*Lifestyle* – how are you balancing out of the pool activities like social, academic and family obligations?

*Team* – are there team goals? Are there others with similar goals that you can partner with to keep each other accountable?

*Communication* – are you asking questions about how to improve? If you can’t make a practice are you asking what it was so you can make it up?

*Leadership* – most lead by example which is powerful. Do you lead the lane every now and then? Do you get to practice on time? Get in the water on time? Never skip yardage?

Just when you think that you cannot do anything else to improve just revisit this list. You will get what you want if you stay focused on these controllable skills. It will not help ONE BIT to merely write down times and put them where you can see them and tell yourself over and over again you are going to get them if you never remind yourself HOW to get them. Like your road map, you may see your destination, but if you are not focused in the road right in front of you, you may end up in a ditch!

Put the outcome goals at the very bottom using just last ¼ of the page. Put the performance goals at the top using the entire top ¾ of a page. Fold the outcome goals under and keep in a place where you can always see the things you CAN CONTROL every day. Don’t even worry about the goals that are not controllable, they will come if you follow the right path. If you keep the times and places at the fore front of your mind the only thing you will do is bring stress and worry to an already difficult road. Relax! Have fun!! It is your journey!

Example Goal Sheet is below. All performance goals need to be age and ability appropriate and may need far more space than this sheet.

**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Performance Goals**

Technique Nutrition

Training Leadership

Practice Communication

Sets Mental

Competition Practice

**Outcome Goals**

**Times/events Awards Places**