

# Goal Setting

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Goal Setting is a critical component for swimming success. In fact, goal setting is critical for success in any aspect of our lives. While many swimmers have “goals”, they struggle to achieve them because their goals do not meet the specific criteria that all goals must have to be useful. Below are the four pillars that are required for a goal to actually be a goal and be beneficial to swimmers. It should be noted that these pillars or criteria can be used in any aspect of your life where you wish to have goals.

## The Four Pillars/Criteria for any goal:

1. **Goals must be definable:** When a goal is definable, your goal will be clearly understood by anyone. Especially those not in the swimming community.

We often hear a swimmer say that they want to qualify for a particular meet. On the surface, it seems that this goal is clearly defined, but it *may* not be so. ***The example above only meets the first criteria IF the swimmer knows what the qualifying time is.*** A better goal would be to make the actual qualifying time your goal time.

This is also true in other areas of your life. I have had swimmers tell me they want to get an A in math. A noble goal **IF** you know what is required to get an A in math. Do you need a 90%? 92%? In this example, a more definable goal would be to get a 92% (if that is the minimum for an A) in math class.

2. **Goals must be time limited:** If your goal does not have a deadline to complete, then it is a dream. Dreams are great things, but dreams do not get accomplished unless you have goals with deadlines pointing you toward your dream.
3. **Goals must be visible every day:** Seeing your goals everyday is a constant reminder that they exist and reinforces what you are working to accomplish. Many people incorrectly think that their goals must be written down to meet to this criterion. While writing your goals and displaying them in a conspicuous place does meet this criterion, we live in a digital age where there are many ways that you can see your goal every day. How you see your goals everyday is only limited by your imagination...
  - Ways goals are visible everyday.
    - Set a daily reminder on your phone listing your goals.
    - Make your goals your home screen on your phone or tablet.
    - Laminate them and keep them at the end of your lane.
    - Post them on your mirror so you have something to read while you brush your teeth.
4. **You must be willing to do the work required to achieve your goal:** If your goal is to make the 2020 USA Olympic team but you only commit to attending one practice per week, then your goal is invalid. While this criterion can be perceived as vague or open to interpretation; (Do I need 7 practices per week or 9 to achieve this goal?) It is important that you and your coach/teacher are on the same page.

**Types of Goals:** There are two basic types of goals; Short-term goals and long-term goals. Long-term goals are typically goals to be accomplished at the end of a season where short-term goals are goals you want to achieve today or within the month. Short-term goals are very useful in helping us to achieve your long term goals.

Once you have established your season long goals, sit with your coach and discuss things you need to do to achieve your goals. These things should become your short-term goals and they can be very broad. Perhaps you need to work on you dolphin kicks. While getting better at dolphin kicking is something we all want to do, no goal has been defined here. If you currently only take two kicks off the wall and your coach wants you to improve on that, ask him/her *exactly* how many kicks you should take and then you will have a definable goal.

Perhaps your coach tells you that you need to work harder. While this too is a noble pursuit, it is not defined and is therefor not a goal. Again, ask your coach for specific ways that you can work harder. Perhaps, you need to come to more practices. Great! But what is your current attendance percentage and what should that percentage be. Once you have those numbers, you have a definable goal.

When done properly, goals can be an amazing tool to get you through the tough days of practice. They are a constant reminder of where you are and, more importantly, where you want to be.