

Goal Setting for your Student-Athlete



"Where focus goes energy flows." — Tony Robbins, self-help guru

Every athlete eventually needs to start setting goals. Knowing how, what and when to set goals is the key to achieving them.

It's a new year, and it's fair to assume that you have made New Year's resolutions, as did many people across the country. With these resolutions, you have

committed to either breaking bad habits or beginning to practice new habits.

There are probably also some of you who didn't bother to make any resolutions. The simple fact is that only a few resolution makers follow through on their promised changes. The success rate is low because a resolution doesn't usually take into account how you are going to achieve the goal. It just states the goals. Real goal-setting, in a manner that achieves the desired results, must be made with a clear means to monitor progress toward that goal.

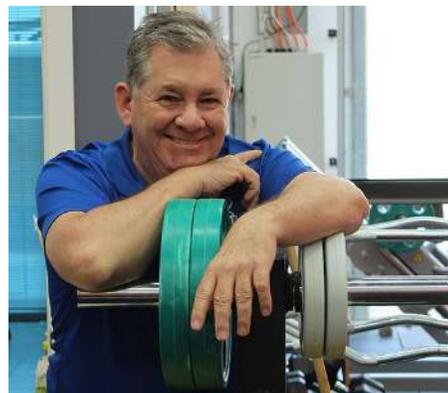
SMART goals

Setting goals is important to ensuring progress and advancement in the targeted areas. In sports, goal setting can be an integral part of motivating athletes to improve their performance and achieve at a high level.

However, there is a right way and a wrong way to set goals, with the right way increasing the probability that the goals which are set are achieved. Experts agree that the best goals are set through a specific process through which they meet specific criteria. There is even a meaningful acronym which is used to state these criteria: **SMART**.

Goals should be:

- 1 **S**pecific
- 2 **M**easurable
- 3 **A**ttainable
- 4 **R**elevant
- 5 **T**ime-Specific



An example of a SMART goal an athlete might set could be a basketball player who wants to improve shooting efficiency deciding to try to average above a 50 percent field goal percentage from the field for the entire season.

Types of goals

The above is an example of a **performance goal** where the athlete sets a benchmark of achievement, but there are two other types of goals that could also be set.

Outcome goals are bigger-picture goals for athletics and competition that reference winning a game or a title or even making the team. For these athletes, one of their outcome goals for the season could be to make it to the state semi-finals. Michael Jordan set one such goal, to make his high school varsity basketball team in his junior year after being cut as a sophomore, and it drove him to work relentlessly on his game and dominate his junior-varsity team.

Another type of goal, which connects directly to performance goals, is a **process goal**. This type of goal could include an athlete trying to make 100 shots per day from various spots on the court. These goals encompass the everyday aspects of achieving the larger performance and outcome goals and require practice, repetition and, at times, frustration.

How to make it work

With all the different types of goals you could come up with to improve your game, it is usually beneficial to write them down so that you can refer to them further down the line. It is a fact that 50 percent of achieving a goal is writing it down. This is especially important in moments where you have lost focus or are frustrated with results. The list will help you keep perspective of what you are trying to achieve.



While you may have goals for yourself related to things that you may want to work on, it might also be a good idea to get input from your coaches on what exactly you need to improve to take your game to the next level. They might have different ideas of what parts of your game need to be improved to make you a more effective player. They will also be able to offer you some guidance on how exactly to frame and execute the goals that you have set for yourself. For some of you, your parents could also be a helpful resource, especially if they are heavily involved in your athletic career and deeply supportive of your efforts to

improve. Try not to get feedback from just one source. It is best to seek input from at least three sources and set your goals for improvement around the common responses.

Start by asking your sources the following questions:

- 1 What are the three things I should be working on to improve my game?
- 2 Can you help me lay them out as SMART goals?

Coaches, teachers, trainers, and parents love it when an athlete shows the will to improve, and most will be happy to help with this process. Goals are an important aspect of consistently producing results. Properly appreciating and learning the process of goal setting in your athletic career is a skill that will be useful for the rest of your life, even as you go into the working world.

CHECKLIST



Why set goals?

Another important part of goal setting to keep in mind is why exactly you want to achieve the goals you have set. If you always keep in mind why you want to achieve something, it will always provide motivation for you when the frustrating periods of the journey come around.



Make sure that each goal you set has an attached reasoning for why it should be a goal, beyond simply making yourself a better player. For the basketball player above, maybe a 50 percent field goal percentage will make them a more attractive prospect for college coaches to recruit, separating them somewhat from other players around the country who also score a lot of points.

Whatever you do, always remember that the goals you set, especially the longer-term ones, can be broken up into smaller chunks. It will be a step-by-step process to achieve each goal, but this will make it easier for you to keep track of your progress and keep yourself from getting overwhelmed when you feel like things aren't going your way.