

The importance of setting goals

“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.”

Louis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

This exchange between Alice and the caterpillar from the classic novel superbly illustrates the importance of setting goals in swimming and most everything we do in life. Goal setting is an effective way to add direction, motivation and support to your practices and competitions. Knowing what you want to achieve everyday in the water and where you want to go with your swimming is the first step to becoming a champion.

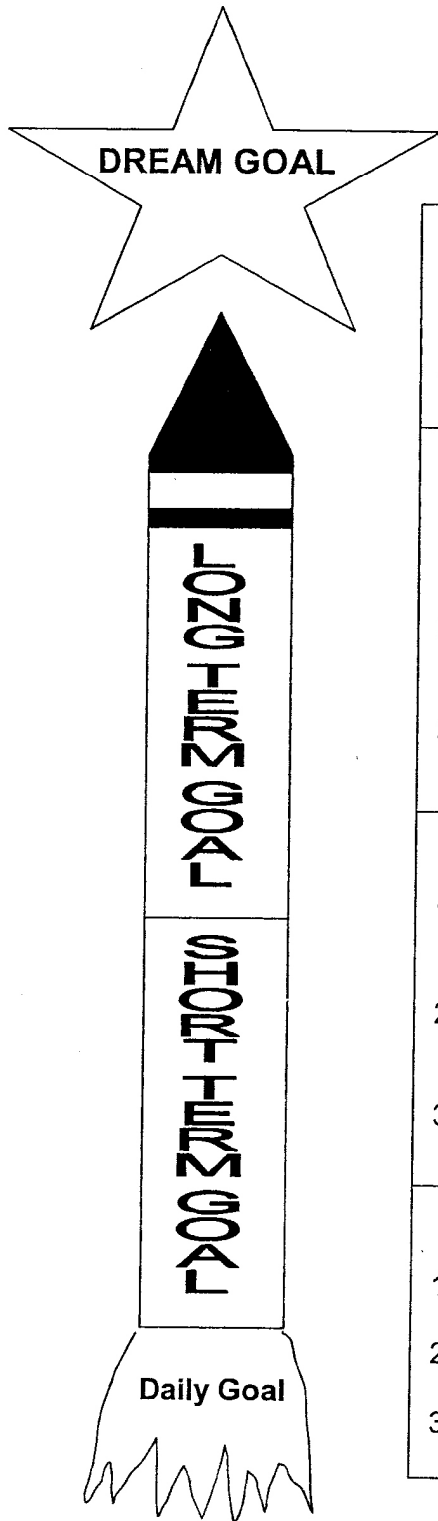
A few notes on goal setting:

- Goals serve two basic functions. They give swimmers something to aim for and help them find a way to get there. As such, goals can serve as major tools for motivation.
- No one goal is any better than another. Jane’s goal of swimming at the Olympics is no better than John’s goal of qualifying for Nationals. They are both successful if they motivate the swimming to achieve their dreams.
- Goals should be measurable, meaningful to the individual, and specific. Measurable so that you can monitor your progress and make adjustments when necessary. They must be meaningful to the individual making them, not just their coaches or parents. Specific means just that, *this goal by this date*.
- It is very, very important to write down your goals, not just keep them in your head. Putting them on a piece of paper that you can look at before you go to bed at night and when you wake up in the morning is a great way to keep the goals at the front of your mind. Many great athletes also keep a written copy of their goals in their kitbags. Constant reminders of where you’d like to be make the journey more fun and rewarding.
- Goals should be based on things you can control. Times and achievements are more attainable than your final ranking. You cannot control what your competitors are doing.
- It is very important to share your goals with your coach and your parents so that they can help you achieve those goals.
- It is very important to continuously monitor your progress towards your goals and adjust them accordingly from time to time.

On the following page we've included a special sheet for the swimmers to use for their own goal setting. It is important to put your goals down on paper and share them with your parents and coaches. This makes them real and not just a thought floating around in your head! There are four primary types of goals:

- 1) **Dream Goals-** Allow you to project into the future without any limits.
- 2) **Long Term Goals-** 2-3 season or years down the road. Long terms goals should be a little more realistic then dream goals. Unrealistic goals can lead to heartache and take the enjoyment out of swimming. (Remember that our number one goal should always be to love what we are doing!)
- 3) **Short Term Goals-** A few weeks to months. These are the stepping stones for the long term goals. They allow you to monitor your success towards your long term goals.
- 4) **Daily Goals-** These are set every time you practice. They help to motivate you to bring more intensity and focus to every session.

Once you have written down your goals, you have to do your best to follow through on them every day. Failure to achieve your goals does not mean you have failed your journey. We learn more from failure then we do from success.



Exercise 6: Shoot for the Stars!

Use the goal setting rocket to help define your dream goal(s), long term, short term and daily goals.

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| Dream Goals | |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| Long Term Goals | |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| Short Term Goals | |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| Daily Goals | |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |