

SMART Goal setting!



Many athletes train without first setting their goals correctly. Setting smart goals is very important as it improves likelihood of success.

Have you ever set goals, only to find them difficult/impossible to achieve? Here are some of the reasons why we fail to achieve our goals and how to set SMART goals instead.

Often we want to attain the unattainable/ achieve the unlikely/impossible. The question is do we want to achieve these goals as a result of our own wishes or the wishes of others or because we have an unrealistic expectations of ourselves? It is important that our mind and emotions are in tune with the goals we are setting. If we are not passionate about achieving certain goals we will most likely not achieve them.

Goal-setting must be **SMART**. This means that our goals must be:

S- Specific

Create a specific plan of how you can achieve your goal. It is too vague to say "I want to perform better". Create a detailed plan of how exactly you want to achieve this. This means the goal is clear and unambiguous; a specific goal will usually answer the five "W" questions:

What: What do I want to accomplish?

Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

Who: Who is involved?

Where: Identify a location.

Which: Identify requirements and constraints.

M- Meaningful.

The goal must be meaningful to YOU and you must really want it. It doesn't help to train for something simply because your coaches tell you that you have the talent to win the competition or race when you do not really enjoy the sport.

A- Attainable.

You must be able to reach your goal. Start with small steps and consider all the negatives and positives. Ask yourself what obstacles could be in your way and try to find a way around them. When training, think of your next training session and try to better yourself, in the now, instead of thinking of the entire path you still have to follow to get to your goal. Only looking at the end result can be too overwhelming and will likely make you feel like giving up.

R- Realistic.

Your goals must be realistic. Many people set unrealistic goals, e.g. losing 20kg in the next 3 weeks. Unrealistic goals cannot be achieved and only serve to discourage you, by making you feel like you have no will power and that you have failed. Be realistic with your training program, e.g. training too much can make you feel exhausted and lower your immune system. On the other hand training too little will hinder progress too.

T- Time limit.

Hang/stick your goals up where you can see them, to stay on track. Visualise yourself having achieved what you wanted to and be persistent because motivation alone is not always enough. You need to tick off each milestone you have achieved every day or week. Reflect on your training sessions and races and identify where you have improved, compared to the last session or race. This is an amazing feeling; celebrate all your achievements- no matter how small they are! You will be astonished by how quickly you can make your goals become reality.

You must set time limits for your goals. If you do not have a time limit, you may forget about your goals and don't feel the necessity to work on them every day.

Now that you know how to set smart goals, it is important to write them down. Goals that are written down have more meaning, as we are making them a reality.

Make sure that you write down short term and long term goals. The short term goals can be goals for the next few weeks and months and the long term goals can be goals for the next three years. Those goals need to be broken down into smaller milestones so that you can measure if you are still on track. Don't be too rigid, you can make changes if necessary. Also, we need to have a plan B if our steps cannot be completed at a certain time. Athletes sustain injuries and cannot train for a period of time should not give up because they cannot stay on track. Rather work out a different training program that would still allow you to achieve your goal. It might be better to rather see it as a rest period which can also make you feel stronger and allow you to grow as a competitor.

Don't write down too many goals, otherwise you might feel overwhelmed.

Write your goals down in form of a list and look which goals are most important and which ones can be achieved a bit later. Rearrange them accordingly!

Prioritising your goals helps to start with the one you feel most passionate about and will make you work harder to achieve it. Always try to understand the reasons for wanting to achieve a certain goal. This will make you feel more positive about it.

