

Principles of Goal-setting

Good planning is really a series of structured and integrated goal-setting exercises. However, to be effective, goals need to be set in the right way and used regularly - at every training and coaching session, as well as every competition. Goal-setting can be one of the most important and powerful coaching tools to give students direction and help them achieve success. Athletes and coaches rate goal-setting as an important strategy.

Goal-setting is simply a technique to help instructors and students determine:

- Long-term goals - dreams, objectives or targets
- Intermediate and short-term goals - the stepping stones or landmarks which progressively lead you towards your long-term goals.

Goal-setting can help instructors and students to:

- Improve organisation or planning skills
- Action plan to ensure progress over both the long - and short-term
- Agree priorities and make decisions
- Focus attention on key issues
- Direct effort towards different tasks
- Enhance or maintain motivation through the achievement of success
- Develop specific aspects of performance
- Monitor progress and provide feedback.

However, goal-setting can only be useful if the goals are suitable (eg challenging but achievable). The objective of becoming national champion this season, while laudable, may not be achievable by all students. The objectives need to be achievable and then goals can be set accordingly. There needs to be an element of flexibility within goal-setting so that goals can be modified to reflect changing circumstances.

Guidelines for effective goal-setting:

- Specific goals are better than general goals
- Goals should be measurable
- Difficult goals are better than easy goals
- Short-term goals can be useful in achieving longer-term goals
- Performance goals are better than outcome goals
- Goals should be written down and closely monitored
- Goals must be accepted by the student.