

Goal Setting Process

Goal setting is one of the most important skills for athletes to learn. The goal-setting process helps athletes understand where they are currently, where they want to go, and what they have to do to get there. In swimming, athletes are unable to control much of what their competition does during a race. Because of this, it is important for athletes to learn how to set systematic goals that are focused on the process and performance rather than focused on the outcome of competition.

When setting goals for the upcoming season, athletes will be asked to pick a goal time (*outcome*) per event, they will then list 3-6 *process* goals (skills, techniques, strategies, or behaviors) that you will improve to help them achieve this goal time, and they will also list 2-4 *performance* goals that will help you reach your goal (these are statistically based). Below is a breakdown of the differences between these three types of goals:

Types of Goals: Outcome Goals, Performance Goals, and Process Goals. Of note, your level of control goes from low to high as you move from Outcome to Performance to Process Goals.

- **Outcome Goals** are those which focus on the end-result of a competition that depends on how well you perform against / compared to an opponent(s). Control Level = LOW, since the actions and behaviors of your competitors can significantly impact whether or not you achieve your goal.
- **Performance Goals** are those which focus on achieving a certain standard of performance or an objective measure that is comparable to your own previous results. Control Level = MEDIUM to HIGH, since these are determined primarily by your actions and behaviors, although some external factors may impact you (e.g., environmental conditions, race strategies of others, equipment issues).
- **Process Goals** are those which focus primarily on the 'quality' of a skill, technique, strategy, behavior, etc. These goals are the fundamental building blocks to achieving both performance and outcome goals. For example, to improve your personal best or win, you may need to improve your stride / stroke length, increase communication with a team-mate, become more 'fluid' in your execution of a skill, etc. Control Level = HIGH, since these are generally things you can work on and develop independent of your competition and in a variety of environmental conditions.

This information came from Dr. Bruce Pinel, and Alan Kornspan.