

Goal Setting

Name: _____



Great weightlifters... Plan how their goals will be achieved



Weightlifting is a physically demanding sport which requires athletes to dedicate a large amount of time to training and recovery. **Being able to set clear goals in both sporting and lifestyle domains helps to provide direction and support long-term progress.**

Types of Goals

There are three types of goals that we can use: **outcome goals**, **performance goals** and **process goals**.

TYPE OF GOAL	DEFINITION
Outcome goals	These focus on the result we want to achieve. These are typically norm-referenced (they involve comparison with an external source such as other competitors). We have less control over outcome goals as they can be affected by outside influences.
Performance goals	These are the personal milestones that can support the achievement of our outcome goal. These are self-referenced (based on an internal measure of performance such as a personal best). These are mostly in our control.
Process goals	These are the specific actions that can help to achieve performance goals. These are also self-referenced and relate to how we do something (e.g., our behaviours/strategy). We have total control over process goals.

Identify the type of goal

Answer the questions below by inputting the correct type of goal (either **process goals**, **performance goals** or **outcome goals**).

Question	Answer
1. Which type of goal do we have the most control over?	
2. Which goals are norm-referenced (draw comparison against others)?	
3. Personal bests (PBs) are examples of what type of goals?	
4. Which type of goal do we have the least amount of control over?	
5. Which goal is the most short-term focused?	
6. Which type of goal is mostly, but not exclusively in our control?	

Using goal setting effectively

Goal setting has been identified by researchers as a psychological characteristic of developing excellence (PCDE). In other words, it is a mental skill which can help to turn potential into performance.

According to research carried out by MacNamara and colleagues (2010), elite performers:

- Have the ability to independently set training goals,
- Can modify goals when needed,
- Set realistic goals for competition,
- Set process and outcome goals.

Review the statements below and reflect on whether you think they are true or false.

Statement	True or False?
1. Goals should be challenging	
2. Goals should be fixed and should not change	
3. Most of your attention should be on your outcome goal	
4. You shouldn't seek help when trying to achieve your goals	
5. You should not reward yourself when you achieve your goals	

Answers and additional information are provided towards the end of this workbook.

British Weight Lifting 5-Step Goal Map

A British Weight Lifting goal map template is included in this workbook. You can use the five-step process below to help create your own goal map.

Step 1: Identify your outcome goal

Your outcome goal relates to the end result you want to achieve. Outcome goals should be objective (norm-referenced) and time-bound (i.e., to be completed by a specific deadline).

Athletes may set outcome goals over different time periods

For example, athletes who are new to the sport may set outcome goals over relatively short periods of time (e.g., a 12-week goal for their first weightlifting competition). More experienced athletes may establish a longer-term outcome goal that relates to their career ambition (e.g., winning a medal at the Olympic games in 8 years-time).

Key point: Your outcome goal provides direction; it will influence the performance and process goals you set and the decisions you make in your training and lifestyle.

Step 2: Identify your why

This step is arguably the most important step in the goal setting process. Once you have established your outcome goal, it is important to consider why you want to achieve it.

Reflect on the following questions:

- *What will achieving this goal give you?*
- *How will achieving this goal make you feel?*
- *Who is the person you will become in the process of striving to achieve this goal?*

Key point: Establishing your why is not always an easy process. It can take time to understand what is driving you to perform and succeed in achieving your goals. However, once it has been established it can help you to remain committed, especially when you experience challenges along the way.

British Weight Lifting 5-Step Goal Map

Step 3: Identify the stepping stones

The stepping stones are the performance goals that will underpin the achievement of the outcome goal. They should include the areas of your training and lifestyle that will affect your ability to achieve your outcome goal.

Key point: It is up to you to determine what the stepping stones are. It may help to work with the members of your support team such as your coach, to identify the key areas that will help you. It is also important to consider factors outside of the gym, which may influence your performance.

As an example, athletes may set performance goals in the following areas:

- Technical development
- Physical development
- Competition performance
- Psychological skills
- Mental health
- Nutrition
- Recovery

These are not an exhaustive list. Depending on the athlete and their situation, there may be many more areas of an athlete's life that need to be taken into consideration (e.g., education and/or career development).

Step 4: Identify your target process goals

Target process goals are the actions that you need to start doing to achieve your longer-term goal. These should be totally in your control (i.e., not reliant on anyone else), and should be actions that can be undertaken immediately.

Key point: It is recommended that you focus on a maximum of 1-2 target process goals at a time. Any more than that can be overwhelming and reduce the chances of sticking to them. The target goals you set will depend on what you think is most important for you to improve; it might be helpful to set one target goal that is sport-specific (i.e., training/competition) and one that focuses on performance outside of the gym (e.g., relating to nutrition or recovery).

British Weight Lifting 5-Step Goal Map

Step 5: Identify your maintenance process goals

Maintenance process goals are the actions that you need to keep doing to achieve your longer-term goal. Again, these should be totally in your control.

Key point: Over time, your target goals can become maintenance goals.

Bonus step: Identify challenges and support

Once you set goals, there is a good chance that challenges will come your way. It can be helpful to identify some of these challenges proactively and consider how you might respond to them in advance. A key part of this will involve considering who might be in your support team that can help you. Seeking and using support from others is a valuable skill that elite performers utilise.

Goal Map Example

Here is an example of how an athlete may utilise the Goal Map. Remember, this is a general example; it is important that you make the goals specific and relevant to you, rather than try to copy someone else.

GOAL OUTCOME

Win a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games in 2026

WHY?

To challenge myself to become a better performer, mentally and physically and to enjoy the process of continuing to learn and develop

PERFORMANCE GOAL (STEPPING STONE)

In gym (target)

Power clean 130kg (physical development)

Out of the gym performance goal (stepping stone)

Sleep 7.5 hours per night

PROCESS GOAL (TARGET)

In gym (target)

Perform 3 x 3 clean pull to knee with a 2 second pause at the knee, at the start of each clean session (to reinforce correct positioning)

Out of the gym performance goal (maintenance)

Shut down electronic devices 1 hour before bedtime

Remember, the outcome goal provides direction – it helps to inform decisions around training, competition and lifestyle. However, it is also the goal we have the least control over as it is usually dependent on others (e.g., other lifters may total more than you in a competition).

The performance and process goals are self-referenced (they are independent of others), meaning we have a greater degree of control. Focusing on the process and performance goals increases our chances of achieving our outcome goal.

MY OUTCOME GOAL



MY WHY



Performance

Process

T/M

Target Goal 1:	
Challenge	Response
People who can support	How?

Target Goal 2:	
Challenge	Response
People who can support	How?

Notes:

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Must...

Athletes must understand:

- Set specific **outcome goals** to help provide direction and benchmark progress
- Identify key milestones (**performance goals**) that will underpin their ability to achieve their outcome goals
- Create **process goals** that are fully in their control and aligned with their performance goals



E.g., an athlete sets a career goal to win a Commonwealth Games gold medal. This is a very specific outcome goal that is clear to them and the people around them.

Should...

Athletes should:

- Prioritise 1 - 2 target process goals at a time
- Set both sport (weightlifting) and lifestyle (non-weightlifting) goals
- Share their goals with key members of their support team



E.g., an athlete may prioritise improving their pre-sleep routine to enhance their recovery, with a target goal to stretch and perform deep breathing exercises for 5 minutes, half an hour before going to bed.

May...

Athletes may:

- Set goals over different timeframes
- Keep their goals visible by writing them down / printing them out
- Get support to help them set goals from specialists such as a sport psychologist or lifestyle advisor



E.g., athletes with long-term ambitions in weightlifting might set goals over 6 - 8 years, because this is the length of timeframe it would take to realistically achieve their goal. Athletes new to the sport, may set goals over a shorter time.

Using goal setting effectively*

1. Goals should be challenging = True

Yes, goals should be challenging, but realistic.

It can be useful to remember the Goldilocks principle: We should try to avoid setting goals that are too easy or too hard, and instead aim for ones that are 'just right.' If we set goals that are easy to achieve, we can become less motivated ("What's the point in doing this, it's too easy"). The same is true for goals that seem unrealistic ("What's the point in doing this, I'll never be able to do it"). What we need to aim for is what authors Brad Stulberg and Steve Magness refer to as 'just manageable challenges.' These are the challenges that can 'make you feel a little out of control but not quite anxious.'

2. Goals should be fixed and should not change = False

Instead, goals should be flexible and reviewed at regular intervals.

Goals, particularly outcome goals, help to provide direction. We can view them in the same way that we might view a road map. It can be helpful to know where we are going, and the way to get there. But things can change, including the desired destination. These often change when we experience different events. This is why setting goals is not something we should do just once; instead, it is a process that we should come back to at different times, checking our progress and deciding if we are on the best path or not.

3. Most of your attention should be on your outcome goal = False

Instead, we should apply most of our attention on our process goals.

Our process goals represent the actions we can take that are fully in our control. Author James Clear highlights this importance when he introduces the problem: 'Winners and losers have the same goals.' He drives home this point with the example that most Olympians want to win a gold medal, but not many do. It's not the outcome goal that separates the winners from the losers, but the processes (i.e., the systems they have in place to continually improve).

4. Seeking help can be an effective strategy to achieve your goals = True

Creating and using social support has been identified as a psychological skill of elite performers.

Members of an athlete's support team (e.g., coaches, family, friends, specialist practitioners, teachers) can provide support in different ways, including emotional and informational support. This type of support can increase an athlete's ability to overcome challenges and make long-term progress.

5. You should not reward yourself when you achieve your goals = False

Instead, recognising when you have performed well, can help to increase your commitment to your goal.

There is a belief among some athletes, that recognising achievement can lead to complacency (i.e., "If I celebrate my success, it will stifle my motivation to keep improving"). While it is beneficial to continually evaluate your performance, and determine areas for improvement, recognising and rewarding your achievements is equally important. Reflecting on progress you have made can improve confidence and help you to derive fulfilment along the journey.

*We have suggested that each of these statements is true or false, based on the supporting information provided and because we believe there are certain principles that underpin long-term, sustainable success. However, we encourage you to think critically about each of these statements and determine whether they are true or false for you.

Quiz activity answers

Question	Answer
1. Which type of goal do we have the most control over?	Process
2. Which goals are norm-referenced (draw comparison against others)?	Outcome
3. Personal bests (PBs) are examples of what type of goals?	Performance
4. Which type of goal do we have the least amount of control over?	Outcome
5. Which goal is the most short-term focused?	Process
6. Which type of goal is mostly, but not exclusively in our control?"	Performance

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The Goal Map template was inspired by the “Dream Machine” planning activity found in The Chimp Paradox by Professor Steve Peters.

References

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This workbook has been designed for athletes who are part of the British Weight Lifting Talent Pathway. For more information about British Weight Lifting please visit www.britishweightlifting.org.