

I often hear from my students that they find it hard to set goals- not because they do not know what they want to achieve, but because they find the terminology and acronyms (like SMART) confusing. Another stumbling block in goal setting is diminished self-belief- (but I will cover this more in-depth in another piece). What kind of goals are there and how to approach the subject of effective goal setting?

Let us consider two main types of goals you would normally come across in print or when speaking to a coach: the **Long-Term goal** and the **Process goal**. Now, the Long-Term goal (aka **End goal, Ultimate goal**) is the clearest one of them all- it is the ultimate goal you want to achieve in the near/far future. Examples of goals for different levels of archers: 1) I want to be comfortable and in control of my recurve bow set-up with full stabilisation system by the end of 2021; 2) I want to win the club outdoor championship in 2022; 3) I want to be ranked amongst the top 5 recurve indoor nationals in 2021; 4) I want to be a part of the Olympic squad for 2024 Games.

What you will first notice is that the language I used to voice those goals is deliberately modest. It is **process-oriented**, i.e. it presumes that one must focus on the course of action, and one that keeps you grounded and mentally prepared for a potential shortcoming. Some may say that it does not sound ambitious enough. Perhaps there is some truth in that, but the way I would like you to understand it is, that once you 'get to the Olympic squad' there is your time to shine. You give yourself a mental boost, 'an encouraging pat on the back' and extra motivation to surpass the goal you have achieved there and then: an excellent instant motivation during high performance event, an opportunity to really test yourself as an athlete. Whether you progress any further remains to be seen; however, you have achieved what you have initially set out to achieve and more. Plans for your next long-term goal can start there (after a well-earned break, of course). It is useful to take on the **mindset of a defending champion**, in that you must continuously prove your worth to yourself.

Nowhere do I say: "I want to be the best at recurve archery; I want to win the Indoor Nationals; I want to win the Olympics". Second, you will note that goals voiced are aimed at a specific time frame and/ or event: "... by the end of 2021; 2021 Indoor Nationals; Outdoor Championship in 2022; part of the Olympic squad in 2024 Games." Every long-term goal has a specific expiry date and is, to an extent, modest. You may win the Nationals, but you must also be prepared to lose. That is exactly the kind of 'realism' you want when setting goals, because in reality you will never know how you or your opponents will perform on the day. You must make **a life-long commitment to yourself** to be the best you can be at that particular time.

This brings me to the second type of goal- the Process goal. Process goals are in between today and your ultimate Long-term goal. These are **tactical daily steps that make up your training plan until the ultimate day**- your 'Olympic games' day. These goals target your technical, physical and mental development. They also serve as great **performance assessment markers**- they will help you assess your progress and pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses. For example, you have 12 months until the Indoor Nationals. During this period,

you will have weeks/ months to dedicate to technique improvement or change; then physical strength development and similarly with the mental game. Because **working on everything at the same time is never productive**, your coach or team of coaches will decide and devise a training plan for you. The curriculum is very specific and detailed, so you and your team are able to analyse, adapt and change it as you move closer to your End goal, your 'Olympics'. In the elite sports (individual and team disciplines) you will also come across **Performance Goals**. These will deal primarily with the competition side of the sport and will be broken into specific categories, such as the development of play patterns and strategies, improvement of mental and emotional control during **high pressure performance**, as well as development and implementation of other specific high-pressure routines to boost performance and morale. You could say that the Performance goal sits in between the Process and the End goals. These are of course set when athletes have an excellent level of technical and physical mastery and a great deal of confidence, because without them, there would be no point in putting an athlete under extreme pressure: where there is no confidence in one's form, there can be no good consistent result or progress in your performance, especially under high pressure.

### How to Prepare Yourself for Effective Goal Setting.

The first, and most important step in goal setting (sport & life) is to acknowledge that you are the one making the decisions and changes in the way you act and think. **You are responsible for the consequences of your actions and making commitments to yourself.** You do not owe anything to anyone, neither does anyone owe anything to you. There is always someone who is worse than you and someone who is better. There are people who like you and support you and people who dislike you. In varying degrees, it is the same for every person on the planet. It is therefore important to **focus on your own individual process and progress**, whilst staying positive, as dwelling on shortcomings and comparisons to others will always plant the seeds of doubt in your mind and impact your self-esteem and therefore your performance.

**Building on existing strengths and learning new skills is always harder because it requires effort and persistence.** It is much easier to give in to the instant emotional response to the negative situation, or to avoid dealing with the issue, but it is a normal response. It is crucial to be mindful and to avoid staying in a negative emotional state for a prolonged period of time, because it can get in the way of your life and sports goals and have a significant impact on your wellbeing. You **start by being kinder to yourself**, for example, **stop and notice the negative language you use in your everyday life** when you talk to others or when you think to yourself: when you notice these, replace 'I can't' with 'I can', 'I am capable/worthy/able' instead of 'incapable/ unworthy/ unable.', "I can try" instead of 'I absolutely must'. Try and catch that moment and **re-evaluate your thoughts**. You can ask yourself: "Am I REALLY incapable? What is stopping me?", "Will it really be the end of the world if I lose?". **Start questioning some of your goal-blocking beliefs and phrases, and you will notice that so many of those are simply demanding and untrue.**

It is important to recognise that **it is normal to have setbacks and delays**, (like injuries in sport, family matters etc), but what is important is to equip yourself with the right tools that will assist you in maintaining and **building mental resilience, 'the fighting spirit'**. It is good practice to plan for alternative solutions and how you will manage obstacles and failure along the way. Once you have realised and accepted that, you can begin to work on a healthy, realistic set of goals.

## A Final Note

The biggest difference between an **Olympic athlete** and an amateur is that the former is **very disciplined and focussed**, and it is easier to set goals, create and implement training plans for these athletes. For the amateur athlete, sport often (but not exclusively) plays a secondary part in their life. So whatever preoccupations, occupations and lifestyles these archers may have, **it is important to choose the Long-term goal first**. Whatever that desired achievement may be, it must be **realistic** and most important, **motivational**. The reason why it must be motivational is simple- **it must reignite your interest and perseverance during hard times**, be it recovering from an injury, or a simple everyday episode of laziness, or anything in between. A carefully structured training plan that outlines your Process goals is essential. Without that whatever you do becomes lost in time and space. **A good, professional coach will always help you with goal setting, so find the one that suits you**. The ultimate goal comes from you, but the direction and guidance are what your coach will help you with, so that your plan is as realistic and applicable to you as possible.

**"If you don't have the time to do it right, when will you have the time to do it over?"**

John Wooden, legendary basketball player and coach.

**Please follow the link below for your easy step-by-step guide to understanding and setting SMART goals:**

<https://www.muvbud.com/blog/setting-smart-goals-in-sports/>

By Kristina Dolgilevica, Third Eye Archery



**S**

**SPECIFIC** - state exactly what you want to achieve. Can you break a larger task into smaller steps? You must have distinct answers to the following questions: What, Who, When and Why?



**M**

**MEASURABLE** - establish concrete criteria for measuring your progress for any goal or subgoal you set. How will you know when your goal is achieved?

**A**

**ACTION-ORIENTED** - describe your goals using action verbs. Outline exact steps you will take to achieve your goal. Start to develop the right attitude, abilities, skills and financial capacity to reach your goal

**R**

**REALISTIC** - give yourself the opportunity to succeed by setting goals you will actually be able to accomplish. Consider obstacles that you may need to overcome. Revisit coping strategies

**T**

**TIME-BOUND** - how much time do you have to complete the task? Decide exactly when you will start and finish your goal

THIRDEYEARCHERY