

Goals

Setting goals is an important part of developing, both in life and in athletics. A properly established goal will help you develop while a poorly set goal will bring a lot of heartbreak. There are a lot of books on goal setting but I recommend that any goals be SMART ones:

Specific	Goals need to be very SPECIFIC and clearly understood. A goal like “I want to be a better hitter” sounds very good but what does that really mean? Instead consider setting goals like “I want to learn to hit outside pitches to right field.” “I want to hit line drives instead of ground balls” If a goal isn’t specific then emotion will take over after 1 bad at bat.
Measurable	Goals need to be able to be MEASURED numerically. A goal like “I want to be able to run from first to second faster” is pretty specific, but it doesn’t contain anything that is measured. Instead consider putting numbers in the goal like “I want to run from first to second in 3.5 seconds.” Then you have something that is very specific that is also measurable so that you clearly know when you have reached your goal.
Attainable	Goals need to be humanly ATTAINABLE. Infielders need to be able to react to line drives quickly and sometimes leave their feet to catch them. A goal like “I want to be able to jump off the ground 8.25 feet to catch line drives” is very specific, and it is measurable, however no human beings can do that so setting that as a goal is just going to lead to disappointment and will never be reached. In order to set a goal do some research and find out what is possible first.
Realistic	Goals need to be REALISTIC based on the person setting the goal. A goal that is perfect for one player like “I want to hit 10 home runs over the fence this year” may not be very realistic for a girl half her size, that is playing her first year of ball and hasn’t taken any batting lessons. Although that goal would be specific, is measurable and is humanly attainable, it just wouldn’t be very realistic for this particular girl.
Towards something	Goals need to be set in a way that moves the person TOWARDS SOMETHING. A goal like “I don’t want to strike out this game” is specific, measurable, attainable and realistic but it doesn’t accomplish anything. It is simply a way to avoid something negative. If a girl has a bad habit of swinging at pitches over her head and striking out her goal should instead be something like “This game I’m only going to swing at pitches below my neck.” That is taking her towards a positive behavior.

Some people make the mistake of trying to take on the whole world on the first try when setting goals. The purpose of goals is to help you get better over time. When you realize that you’ll also realize that there a lot of aspects to time and that in order to properly develop your goals need to accommodate all elements of time.

Long Range	LONG RANGE goals have to do with the things that you ultimately want to accomplish regardless of how long it takes. If it were a trip it is the ultimate destination such as “I want to walk from Georgia to California.”. In regards to softball “I want to hit at least 1 home run over the fence before I get to college.” That’s a SMART goal. But if you currently hit the ball into the ground every at bat and that were your only goal then you will get madder and madder each time you don’t hit the ball over the fence. Just as you would if you took each step one by one and kept thinking “I want to walk from Georgia to California.”. The walk or hitting the ball over the fence is going to take a long time for you so you need to set other goals for shorter periods of time so that you know whether or not you will ultimately reach this long range goal.
Mid Range	MID RANGE goals have to do with a few years of time. Before I start my high school career. Before I start my college career. By the time I finish my high school career. By the time I finish my college career. Jus like long range goals, Mid range time frames are too long to think about each and every practice or game. Their purpose is only to have a road map to know whether you are headed in the right direction for your career. “On my journey to California I want to end up in Texas before I’m 15.” or “I want to hit a ball over the outfielders heads before I start playing high school ball.” Are both SMART mid range goals and both serve to get closer and closer to the long range goal. But If you wait until you’ve gotten all the way to Texas to check on your trip, you may find yourself in New York and that is a serious problem. Therefore mid range goals are to far apart to measure if you are on track or recognize if you’ve gone off track so you need to set goals closer in the future.

Short term	SHORT TERM goals have to do with a timeframe in the not so distant future that can easily be focused on and not be lost. If this is the off season then a good time frame might be before the next season starts. If the season just kicked off then a short term goal might be after the first 6 games for some goals or by the end of the season for other goals. The purpose of short term goals is to have something that can be focused on and measured regularly in each practice, game etc. So that you know if you are on track towards your ultimate goal. Why wait until you get to New York to realize you are on the wrong path, when you should have realized it the minute you stepped foot into South Carolina? Contrary, if you are hitting some line drives during your batting practices and scrimmage games then you know you are on track for this coming season. Because you have to hit line drives in order to get the ball over outfielder's heads, and eventually over the fence. As you continue to set and achieve short term goals you know that you will eventually achieve your mid term goals.
Immediate	IMMEDIATE in relation to time are the things that are right here and now. Today. This game. This practice. What is that you can do right now towards something? "I need to find a map and figure out what road will take me from where I am to California." "I need to ask someone how to hit line drives instead of ground balls." Next practice I set a new set of immediate goals that are in between where I am now, and my next short term goal. Every journey begins with the first step, so the purpose of immediate goals is to just take the first or next step and then you know you are heading somewhere. Without that first step you could still be in the same place years from now. As you continually set and achieve immediate goals you begin to gain the confidence that you are going to achieve your short term goals.

Bad Examples	Before starting to set goals it is important to first recognize common/bad goals. Read through the following and see if you can figure out why each is not a SMART goal. Each one breaks at least 1 of the rules, and some break more than one rule. The answers to these are after the good examples: 1. "I don't want to strike out at all this game" 2. "I don't want to hit any ground balls this season." 3. "I want to hit a lot of balls to the outfield this season." 4. "I want to pitch 80 miles an hour by the start of my school career." 5. "I want to run bases better than my older sister did."
Good Examples	Here are some examples of some SMART goals in regards to just two areas of the game. The actual numbers used in the goals are ONLY examples and should not be used as is when setting your own goals. As you'll see you can there are several ways to look at each thing, and each thing can be broken down by time: Batting: 1. "I want to reach base safely 400% of the time (4 out of 10) I am up to bat this season." That meets all of the criteria for a SMART goal, shows understanding of the fact that you have to score to win, you have to reach first in order to be able to score, and it doesn't matter how you reach first (dropped third strike, error, fielders choice, double over outfielders head or a bunt) and takes into account the fact that batting is about averages and not each and every at bat. 2. "I want to hit at least 3 line drives during this season." This is a SMART short term goal that helps accomplish a more mid range goal of hitting the ball over outfielders head perhaps. 3. "I want to have a sacrifice bunt the next time there is someone on third base with less than 2 outs." This is a SMART very short term goal that can then translate into immediate goals like "I need to learn how to bunt" "I need to get over my fear of bunting." "I need to practice bunting at home every day this week." Base running: 1. "I want to be able to successfully steal 3 bases this year." This leads into a whole bunch of other goals like "I need to learn how to get a great jump off of first base when the pitcher releases the ball" "I need to learn how to safely slide so that I won't be afraid to slide under the tag." "I need to learn some drills that can make me faster." Etc. 2. "I want to at least try 1 delayed steal before the end of the 4'th ball game this year." This is a SMART goal that is moving towards something even though it didn't have to be successful. There are times when risky thing need to be tried, and knowing that you at least tried it is a positive thing even if you failed. You will get more confidence, and you also gain information that will make you better next time. It is a very short term goal that helps you gain very quick feedback for another goal like "I want to have at least 1 safe delayed steal before the end of this season." Answers to bad examples: 1 – Not Towards anything. 2. Not very realistic. 3. Not measurable. 4. Not attainable. 5. Not specific does that mean faster, smarter, safer or more aggressive.