

MASTER MASTERS – Mastering Masters Swimming

By Wayne Goldsmith*

If you are like most Master's swimmers, sooner or later you want to get good at it and see how fast you can go.

So how do you make the jump from chump to champ? How do you move from Masters beginner to Masters Master? Becoming a Masters Master is a bit like planning a holiday. You need to answer five simple questions.

1. **Where do I want to go?**
 2. **When do I want to go there?**
 3. **Where am I now?**
 4. **How can I get from where I am now to where I want to go?**
 5. **Once I get there, what next?**
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STEP ONE – Clearly decide where you want to go? SET A GOAL.

If you want to improve, decide just how much improvement you want. This one decision then underpins all the other decisions you need to make about your swimming program. Once you have decided where you want to go, write it down on a big piece of paper and stick it up on your bedroom wall at home. Nothing helps you achieve success like being constantly reminded of your goals.

For example:

- I want to improve all 100 best times by one second.
- I want to set a new age group record for 200 fly.
- I want to qualify for the World Master's Games.

STEP TWO – When do I want to go there? ADD A DEADLINE.

A goal is a dream with a DEADLINE. Once you have decided where you want to go, add a date.

For example:

- I want to improve all 100 best times by one second by JUNE 23RD.
- I want to set a new age group record for 200 fly before I turn 55.
- I want to qualify for the next World Master's Games.

What gets measured gets done!!! By adding a date to your goal you go a long way to making sure it happens!

STEP THREE – Where am I now? DETERMINE YOUR STARTING POINT

Before commencing on any journey you need to clearly understand where you are starting from.

Write down all your PB times for all strokes and distances on a chart like the one below with some space to track progress over time.

My PB times today		DEC	MARCH	JUNE	SEPT	DEC	MARCH	MAY	My goal by JUNE
AUGUST									
50 fly	42.0								37.5
50 back	37.3								35.0
50 breast	44.3								Under 40 seconds
50 free	32.1								Break 30
100 free	1:08.4								1:05.0
100 back	1:22.4								1:15.0
200 IM	3:42.8								3:30.0
200 free	2:32.4								2:20.0

STEP 4 - How do I get from where I am now to where I want to go? PLANNING TO SUCCEED with MASTERS MATHS

On the walls of the US Olympic Committee Training Centre in Colorado Springs are the words.....”NOT EVERY FOUR YEARS.....EVERY DAY” This helps athletes and coaches think about the importance of working to achieve their long term goals little by little, day by day.

It is the same for your Master’s goals.

After writing down your GOAL times and your current PBS, time to do the maths!!!

If your current PB for 100 breast is 1:37 and your goal time in August is 1:25, you need to improve 12 seconds. This seems like a lot of time!

But look at it this way.

- If you swim 2 session each week.
- And you swim 40 weeks each year.
- And you have one year to achieve your goal time.
- You have 80 sessions to improve 12 seconds.

Now divide 12 seconds by 80. That's about 0.15 of a second. That's about the length of your fingernail.

So you don't have to improve 12 seconds, all you need to do is focus on improving by one fingernail length every time you go to the pool! And considering this could come from working on your fitness, flexibility, turns, dives, starts, finishes, technique, speed – it is easy to find your fingernail of improvement every session.

Of course if you are really smart, just grow your fingernails!!

STEP 5 - Once I get there, what next? I DID IT.

Success in swimming is a MOVING TARGET. There are always more rivers to cross, more mountains to climb and more records to break.

Only one race in life will be your last race. Every other race is a learning experience to help you improve for next time.

**Wayne Goldsmith has been in and around swimming for a long time and writes for ASCTA, SAL, ASCA USA and Swimming World. The links for his websites are here for you to continue to follow his expert advice and resources:*

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