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**The 10 Principles of Athletic Success**
By Faster Swimming

There are many, maybe even countless, **methods** to achieve athletic success. However, the **principles** of athletic success are few. Said another way, by someone much smarter than I – “Methods are many, principles are few; methods always change, principles never do.” Follow the principles listed below throughout your athletic career and find success. I suppose you could argue that the base messages apply to your entire life... go figure.

1. Have a Purpose.

This can encompass a lot – a purpose for your set, your workout, your training week, your sport, even a purpose for your life! In sport it really boils down to being both physically and mentally present at training (completing your training with **purpose**), and to having goals (your **purpose** for being there!). Have a purpose, both *in* your training and *for* your training.

2. Follow a Plan.

You should have a plan for your season, your month, your week, your next competition. Having a purpose with no plan is just beating your head against a wall. If you are on a team, planning is mostly the coach's job, if you are on your own – this is your job. The concept of Progressive Overload should be included in your plan, as regular progress should be a result of your training. You should have a plan in place to address Strength and Conditioning for pre-, post-, in- and off-season, as well.

3. Work Hard.

If you need me to define effort for you, you are in trouble! Full efforts are the key to successful training. Along with hard work, you must include smart work: or working on what matters. This all circles back to having a purpose and having a plan. Hard work does not mean all-out effort all of the time either, but working as hard as a rep, set, workout, or season requires. Racing is ALWAYS 100% effort. Always.

4. Be Consistent.

You should be at training. You should have a plan that you follow 90% + of the time, and you should work hard with your purpose in mind. You should eat well 90% + of the time, and you should get 8 hours or more of sleep per night 90% + of the time. Persevere. Motivation follows action, so be consistent in your actions. If you follow the 1st 3 principals **consistently** you will be ahead of 99% of your competition.

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5. Display Adaptability.

Stated simply – find an answer, not an excuse. Make it work – no matter what the circumstance, no matter what the obstacle, you can usually find a way around it. If something comes up that you can't figure out for yourself, ask for help. A good coach is indispensable in this type of situation.

6. Be Prepared.

Just like the Boy Scout's motto – solid preparation will lead to an increased chance of you achieving your goals. Superior preparation wins most often. Plan and prepare for things in advance so that you will have what you need when you need it. This goes for training, food, and sleep (the big 3). Make a list and check items off if you are uneasy or unsure about what you need. This goes double for competitions – use a list to pack and prepare well ahead of time.

7. Competitive Cooperation

Do something EACH DAY that you have never done before. Challenge your team mates to do the same – challenge each other regularly. This is the type of teamwork that makes good teams great! Work harder, prepare better, beat last week's time/sets/reps/weights, etc. Do this for your self each day (**attitude**) and it will carryover to your training partners, team, and environment (**atmosphere**).

8. Control Your Attitude and Atmosphere.

Strive to have a positive and realistic outlook. Do not tolerate complacency or apathy in yourself or in your teammates. Pay attention and be respectful. Do not use the words "can't" or "too"... they foster mental weakness. Your attitude is under your control – so control it to your advantage. Training atmosphere plays a HUGE role in your success – your team should be there to support you, and you to support them. If you are training solo or have a poor training atmosphere – change! Join a team, join a better team, or create a better team if need be.

9. Be a Leader and a Follower.

There will be times when you need to assert yourself and there will be times when you need to take a step back and let someone else take the reigns. Learn to foster both mindsets so that you can take control when needed, and so that you can follow and support others when needed. This applies directly to controlling your **attitude** and **atmosphere** from above.

10. No Limits.


World Records are broken regularly – only because someone thinks they can do so and then acts on this belief. Bruce Lee spoke of limits much better than I can, so here's his quote:

"If you always put limits on yourself and the things you can do, physical or anything, you might as well be dead. It will spread into your work, your morality, your entire being. There are no limits, only plateaus. But then you must not stay there. You must go beyond them. If it kills you, it kills you."

So there you have it – The 10 Principals of Athletic Success. Post this list in an obvious place – your gym bag, your training facility, or even the wall of your room – to remind yourself of the principals of athletic success.

Follow these principals and you will find success!

by Coach John Coffman

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