

# Season Planning

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Season planning is like building a map: it starts with the final destination and works backward. No matter the discipline, athletes and coaches know that success doesn't happen overnight. Whether preparing a swim team for nationals, a water polo squad for a championship, an artistic swimming duet for international trials, or divers for a high-stakes meet, the key is the same: a well-planned season. Aquatic sports are unique because they demand both technical mastery and physical conditioning, and those qualities must be built in careful phases. Season planning provides the structure to balance skill development, conditioning, and competition preparation. It gives athletes confidence that their hard work in training connects directly to peak performance when it matters most. Whether aiming for national championships, international meets, or local progress markers, a good plan balances the big picture with manageable steps.

**Key takeaway:** Key takeaway: Season planning works best when you start with the end goal and build backward, using phased training so every session clearly supports peak performance when it matters most.

## The challenge

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- Coaches often dive too quickly into energy zones and workout details. Without the big picture, daily training risks missing the mark.
- Athletes can get lost if there's no clear “roadmap” to the main competition.
- Planning too rigidly creates stress; planning too loosely creates confusion.

## The framework

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1. **Where do we want to go?** Define goals: championships, target times, skill milestones.
2. **Where are we now?** Establish the baseline (fitness, skills, team readiness).
3. **How do we get there?** Backwards planning: break the season into phases, then into monthly chunks, then into weekly objectives.

## Practical approach

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- **Map competitions.** Plot out championship or key meets first (often summer).
- **Set phases.** Foundations → Skill challenge → Power → Competition.
- **One-month chunks.** Manageable blocks with clear goals. Long enough for change, short enough to adjust.
- **Weekly breakdowns.** Only detailed when the month arrives—keeps plans flexible.
- **Workout focus.** Each session should target one clear skill or adaptation.

# DEVELOPMENT

## Example (Swimming)

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- **Month 1: Basics** - consistent turns, body line, breathing rhythm.
- **Month 2: Challenge** - longer sets, pushing efficiency, refining pacing.
- **Month 3: Power** - race-pace work, harder sets, strength integration.
- **Month 4: Competition** - sharpening starts, simulating meet environments.

## Tips from the expert

- Keep the big picture in mind before worrying about energy zones.
- Reframe goals to include the journey (progress at each stage) not just the final outcome.

## Resources

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### One-Month Chunk Template

- Month:
- Focus (1 line):
- Key session types (e.g., technique / speed / power):
- Measurable target at month end:
- Coach notes / resources: