

Defining Your Goal

By [Jeff Galloway](#)

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Most of the runners that I work with don't have specific time goals. This is fine. Running is a free-form activity that empowers you to choose from a variety of training programs, [races](#), and enriching running experiences. There are, however, some aspects of running that are more rewarding than others, and time improvement can be frustrating. So if you want to train for a time goal this year, at least look at the following background experiences which can keep you motivated when the watch doesn't say what you want it to.

Your Tools: A Journal and a Good Training Guidebook

A journal will help you learn from mistakes and remind you of the good experiences. I interviewed runners before putting together my *Jeff Galloway's Training Journal* and discovered that most want to have the information listed so that they can quickly fill it in after a run. There are many training book choices out there. My two books that have become most popular have been [A Year Round Plan](#) and [Galloway Training Programs](#). Both have the training elements listed for various events each day during the schedule. The former has workouts scheduled for a full year—for 5K, 10K, Half and Full Marathon—so that you have it all laid out each day.

Running Enjoyment

Find a way to enjoy parts of every run—even the harder runs. Most of your runs should be....mostly enjoyable. Schedule a social or a scenic run every week. There are certain trail areas, for example, that I enjoy every time. When runners burn out, they usually have been eliminating pleasurable runs. Take control of your running enjoyment to make sure you're having some fun.

Stay Injury-free

When I review the journals of injured runners I often find the causes of aches and pains. Make a list of past problems, and the workouts, lack of rest, etc. that brought them on. You can then make adjustments to prevent [injuries](#). Above all, at the first sign of a possible injury, take more days off and treat it.

Avoiding Overuse or Burnout

All of us receive warning signs that signal over-training. Unfortunately, we often ignore these or don't know what they are. Your training journal is a wonderful tool for noting any possible ache, pain, loss of desire, unusual fatigue that lingers, etc. If you develop an injury, you can review your journal and often find the reasons. This helps you to become more sensitive to possible problems and make conservative adjustments in the plan to reduce future injury risk.

Time Goals

Those who have not finished a race of any distance, would be best advised to not try for a time goal during the first edition: Just run "to finish". Even in the race itself, it is best to run the first 70 percent at a comfortable training pace. This almost always allows you to finish strong, wanting to do it again.

What is a realistic goal for you?

I've discovered that a one mile time trial (the "magic mile") can very accurately predict what you're capable of running at most distances. For example, if you run a fast mile in 10 minutes, a very hard pace in the half marathon would be 12 min/mi and 13 min/mi in a very hard marathon. You can read about this in [Galloway Training Programs](#). There are other tables and formulas which also tell you what a very hard race pace would be, based upon equivalent level of fitness. It's best to run the first race at least 2 min/mi slower than the pace predicted by the table or formula.

Don't let goal obsession run you into the ground!

You are the captain of your ship. Adjust your goals and races to increase running enjoyment. There will always be another race to run.