

# **The Ultimate Guide to Rapidly Improving and Mastering Any Skill**

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# I. Introduction

## Purpose of The Guide

The aim of this guide is to provide you, your child, your athlete, or your student with a fundamental understanding of what it takes to rapidly improve and master any skill of your choosing. By understanding the value of mastery and that it is supposed to be challenging, adopting the right mindset, understanding the learning process, understanding the different categories of skills, and properly setting goals you will be equipped with the tools necessary to become a master in whatever domain you decide. The first fundamental we must understand is, it must be the individual's choice, if someone doesn't want to learn a specific skill or become a master in a given domain, it does not matter what is said or what is done, the brain will not be primed to learn. They must be willing to be a student.

## Understanding The Value of Mastery

Overall, mastery over a given skill set allows us to achieve our goals more efficiently and maximize our full potential in any area of life we choose. It's a way of being able to take on new challenges and to open doors to new opportunities.

One of the most important concepts when it comes to mastery over anything, is that it is supposed to be difficult, it's supposed to take time & effort, it's supposed to challenge you. In my life I have learned that anything worth striving for is not supposed to be easy, if it were, everyone would have it or be able to do it. The value comes from scarcity and demand. If everyone was able to become a professional athlete with ease, then the prestige of it disappears. I believe once someone understands this, they open the door to perseverance. A quality necessary to achieving one's goals and desires.

## Benefits of Rapid Skill Learning

The more efficient one becomes at acquiring new skills, the more productive one becomes, their problem-solving abilities improve, they have a greater capacity for creativity, they are increasingly adaptable, and they are more capable of self-development. Spending less time to master a given skill set allows for more skills to be learned. Each of us has 24 hrs in a day, if it takes me less time to master a skill, then I have more time to acquire a greater number of skills.

In this guide we will explore the key components of rapid skill acquisition. By understanding the value of mastering any desirable skill, adopting the correct mindset, understanding the learning process, understanding the categories of skills, and properly setting your goals, you will be equipped with the tools to master any skill of your choosing. I believe that if I had access to a guide like this when I was in my teenage years, I could've progressed to an even higher level of soccer than I reached. I hope it will do the same for you or your child.

## II. Adopting The Correct Mindset

### Growth Mindset (I Can) Vs. Fixed Mindset (I Can't)

A growth mindset is the belief that one's abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort, experience, and learning. Individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to persevere in the face of challenges and setbacks, because they believe that they can improve their abilities through hard work and effort. They are also more likely to seek out new learning experiences and take risks, because they see the potential for growth and development.

A fixed mindset is the belief that one's abilities and intelligence are set in stone and cannot be changed. Individuals with a fixed mindset may give up more easily when faced with a challenge, because they believe that their abilities are fixed and cannot be improved. They may also avoid new and challenging experiences because they are afraid of failing and revealing their "true" abilities.

When it comes to skill acquisition a growth mindset is going to be far superior to an individual. As mentioned in the introduction, mastery is difficult and challenging. In the face of setbacks one must believe, they will overcome the challenge and persevere. Many people say "oh they are talented and that is why they find so much success", I'm not so sure if I believe in talent. I believe talented people have adopted the correct mindset towards skill acquisition and understand things that the "untalented" do not. The person that says, I can, will always find a way and the person that says, I can't, will always stay exactly where they are. We will discuss this more.

### 100% Accountability

To hold yourself 100% accountable means to take full responsibility for your actions, decisions, and their outcomes. This means that you accept that you are in control of your own life and that you are the one who is responsible for creating the results you want. When you hold yourself 100% accountable, you:

- Recognize that you are the only one who can control your thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- Accept that you are responsible for the choices you make and the actions you take, especially if those choices lead to mistakes or failures.
- Refuse to make excuses or blame others for the things that go wrong in your life.
- Take ownership of your own learning process, by seeking feedback, understanding your own weaknesses and working on them.
- Have a sense of ownership and commitment, to achieving your own goals and aspirations, and also towards the goals and objectives of the organization/team/partners.

Holding yourself 100% accountable is a powerful mindset that can help you take control of your life and achieve your goals. It empowers you to make changes, to overcome obstacles, and to reach your full potential. It also signals to others that you are dependable, responsible, and trustworthy. Keep in mind that holding yourself 100% accountable is not about being perfect.

or never making mistakes, it's about having the mindset to own up to your errors, learn from them and make things right. When I throw the blame onto someone else or something else, my brain no longer needs to find a solution to the problem. There is always something we can do to achieve the results we desire. If we can't own up to that, we are only slowing our ability to master a domain or halting it entirely.

## Discipline & Consistency

Discipline refers to the ability to control one's actions and behaviors. Discipline helps individuals achieve success by setting and achieving goals, managing time, being consistent, resisting temptations, and developing resilience. It's important for long-term success and maintaining growth in specific areas

Staying 100% motivated all of the time is absolutely impossible. There will be days that you don't want to train, days you don't want to work at all. Discipline is understanding that regardless of how I feel on the day I must still train, I must still work. Most successful people do not feel like working today, or training today, but they know they have duties to their families, to their mission and the task must get done. They understand that in order to achieve their goals they must be disciplined.

Consistency refers to the quality of being dependable and unchanging. Consistency allows individuals to build momentum and make progress over time. It helps to maintain healthy habits and a routine, which leads to achieving goals. Consistency also allows us to measure progress and make adjustments in the approach towards the goal. The more consistent you are at remaining disciplined the easier it becomes. Once you can achieve this state of being, there is nothing that can stand in your way.

## Overcoming The Fear of Failure

Fear of failure will inhibit creativity by making people risk-averse. Leading to a lack of experimentation, motivation, and confidence. It will also lead to self-censorship, self-criticism, and dwelling on past failures, which will make it difficult to stay focused on the task at hand and to be fully engaged in the creative process. Fear of failure is arguably the number one limiting factor to skill acquisition.

Errors and failure are inevitable on the road to mastery, they are essential to skill acquisition because they help to stimulate the brain and encourage the formation of new neural connections (neuroplasticity). When we encounter new or challenging information, our brains are required to work harder to process and understand the task at hand. Mistakes and failure are fundamental to growth and development. I don't know of a single person that was born with the ability to walk or talk. It took years of trial and error to get to the point of walking/running and forming complete sentences, many goo-goo-ga-gas, many trips and falls to get to where we are. This process does not change as we develop, it is fundamental to the learning process which we will go into greater detail in the next section.

## III. Understanding The Learning Process

### Learning is a Skill

Learning itself is a skill, it involves the development of abilities and habits that allow a person to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills. These abilities and habits include the ability to pay attention, to focus, to remember information, to process and analyze information, to make connections between different pieces of information, and to apply knowledge in new situations.

Learning is a process that requires active engagement and practice, similar to other skills. With practice, learning abilities can be improved, similar to how an athlete can improve their physical abilities through practice.

One key component of learning is meta-cognition, or being aware of your own thought processes, when engaging in a task. This will help to improve the efficiency of the learning process and make it easier to transfer knowledge and skills to new situations. The people who have acquired the skill of: how to learn the most efficiently and effectively, will always be the ones who are labeled “talented”.

### The Neurobiology of Learning

The neurobiology of learning refers to the changes that occur in the brain as a result of learning and experience. When we learn something new, our brains form new connections between neurons in a process called neuroplasticity. These connections allow us to store new information and retrieve it later. As we continue to practice and engage with the new information, the connections between neurons will become stronger and more efficient, allowing us to process and recall the information more quickly and accurately.

### Leveraging Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity is a survival mechanism and refers to the brain's ability to change and adapt in response to new experiences. It is the basis for learning and memory, and it allows the brain to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections and pathways.

To leverage neuroplasticity, you can engage in activities that challenge your brain (mistakes & failures) and encourage it to form new connections. This can include learning a new skill or language, practicing meditation or mindfulness, or participating in brain-training exercises.

Repetition is the key way that the brain undergoes changes in response to new information or experiences. When a person performs a task repetitively, the neurons in the brain responsible for that task are activated, the connections between them are strengthened, and the task becomes easier and more efficient. The errors associated within a given task is what allows the brain to fine tune exactly which connections to strengthen and which connections to ignore. As an individual it is often difficult to be aware if the completion of a task is a successful repetition or an errored repetition.

For example in motor skill learning there are two types of tasks: open loop and closed loop learning. Open loop learning are things such as shooting a ball into a goal or throwing a dart at a dart board and whether you scored a goal or hit the dart board indicates if you completed the task successfully or not. These tasks are easy to be aware of because the feedback comes immediately after completion of the task. In closed loop learning, however, the feedback is moment to moment. Take the same example of shooting a ball into the net but instead of the feedback being whether or not the ball goes in the net, your feedback is, striking through the ball with the instep. Here, you could kick a ball in the net with your toe. This is successful, in terms of open loop learning, but unsuccessful in terms of closed loop learning because the task was to shoot with the instep. This is where it becomes difficult to recognize if the task was successfully completed

As a coach, trainer, parent, teacher etc. we are tasked with helping the athlete, child, or student understand if they were successful or not. The main issue is that most of us do not understand the fundamental aspects of skill learning. In order for my brain to know what neuronal connections to strengthen and which ones to ignore, it needs the successful repetitions as well as the errored repetitions. No one wants to see an athlete, child or student fail, but in reality they need to do exactly that. We should aim not to try to limit nor prevent their mistakes and failures for them. Rather teach them the proper way to complete the given task, encourage them to keep going until they have many successful repetitions, and let them know that they need the mistakes and failures in order to truly master any given skill.

In all my years of playing soccer at the highest levels, coaching teams, and training individuals, I have never met someone that wants to purposefully make a mistake, and I am definitely not saying that anyone should try to do that. We should always perform the task at hand with the most focus and effort to complete it successfully. What I am saying is instead, when you, your athlete, your child, or your student makes a mistake or fails you should not sub them out of the game, make them feel bad for making the mistake, nor give up on them. Not only is it slowing their progress towards learning the successful way to complete the task, but you are teaching them a new skill or idea ...."making mistakes and failures is not normal and if they do they are not capable of learning anything". This is maybe the most dangerous and detrimental thing someone can learn.

Remember neuroplasticity is a survival mechanism, when we make a mistake or fail at something we truly care about, we trigger this neuroplastic state which can last for hours after the mistake or failure. The funny part about the brain is that it does not understand the difference between a life and death situation or me losing the ball in a soccer game. If I truly care about something and I fail my brain goes into survival mode. We must learn for ourselves and teach others that the moments after a failure or a mistake are the greatest opportunities for someone to learn.

This is the perfect segway into the next section because in order to be a true master of anything, let's use soccer for example, not only must we master the technical and motor skills associated with the sport but also a plethora of other skills that fall under many different categories.

## IV. Understanding The Categories of Skills

### Motor skills

Involves the ability to move and control the body, such as fine motor skills (e.g., writing, typing) and gross motor skills (e.g., running, jumping).

### Cognitive skills

Related to mental processes such as thinking, reasoning, and memory. Examples include problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making.

### Behavioral skills

Related to social interactions and behavior, such as communication, teamwork, and negotiation.

### Affective skills

Related to emotions, such as emotional intelligence, empathy and resilience.

### Perceptual skills

Related to the interpretation and organization of sensory information, such as vision, hearing, and touch.

### Technical/Specialized skills

Specific to a particular profession or trade, such as passing, dribbling and shooting.

We must understand these categories are not mutually exclusive, meaning, many skills can be placed in more than one category. For example, coaching and teaching can be categorized as both a cognitive and behavioral skill, because they involve both the ability to present information effectively and social interactions

There are also “meta-skills” which can help the effectiveness of other skills. These are typically not immediately obvious such as mindfulness, stress management, time management, and auto or self-regulation.



# V. Proper Goal Setting

## Process Goals vs. Result-Oriented Goals

A result-oriented goal is a specific and measurable objective that focuses on the outcome of a particular task or project. For example, “I want to be a professional soccer player” or “we want to win a championship”

A process goal on the other hand focuses on the steps or actions that need to be taken in order to achieve a desired outcome. These goals are more specifically designed to improve performance and are often incremental in nature. Process goals break down the larger result-oriented goal into smaller, manageable tasks that can be completed in the short-term, making the larger goal of “I want to be a professional soccer player” feel more attainable. These process goals also help to increase self-awareness and metacognition, the ability to think about one’s own thinking.

Metacognition refers to the capacity of an individual to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own cognitive processes, which includes the ability to recognize one’s own limitations in understanding, to engage in self-reflection, and to make changes to one’s thinking or approach in order to improve their understanding. It is a key aspect of self regulation and is considered vital to learning and problem-solving.

An example of a process goal would be acquiring specific technical, behavioral, cognitive, affective, motor, and perceptual skills that together will get me closer to achieving the result-oriented goal of “I want to become a professional soccer player”

## How to Set Goals

Setting goals using both process and outcome goals can help to ensure that you are working towards a desired outcome while also focusing on the steps and actions necessary to achieve it. Here is a list of steps to set your goals:

- Identify a specific, measurable outcome goal.
- Break it down into smaller, manageable process goals.
- Make sure that process goals are specific, measurable, relevant, and time-bound.
- Prioritize them
- Create a plan for each process goal.
- Review and evaluate progress regularly.
- Adjust your plan as needed

This will help you to stay focused on the end result while also paying attention to the actions needed to achieve it.

## VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, my aim of this guide is to help you, your athlete, your child or your student succinctly understand the process of which rapid skill acquisition is attained. Believing that your abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort, experience and learning, and is not fixed is vital. Greatness, Mastery, and the “talented” are not meant for the select few, it is meant for anyone and everyone who has adopted a growth mindset, who is disciplined and consistent in action towards a goal, who holds themselves 100% accountable, and most importantly for those who have overcome the fear of failure. One of my favorite quotes by Joshua Medcalf is “Greatness isn’t for the chosen few, it is for the few that choose”

If you fear failure, someone in your life accidentally instilled this belief into your mindset. Now it is your duty to hold yourself accountable and find a way to overcome this fear and preserve towards whatever desire you wish to achieve. By understanding the learning process and realizing that learning itself is a skill, you can begin to take leaps and bounds towards that desire. Repetitions per unit time, the successful trials, as well as the errored trials, are the key to becoming a master. Holding yourself 100% accountable is vital in this process. If everyone in a team, organization, or family each held themselves accountable, the group as a whole would achieve the group's goals and objectives more efficiently.

As I said earlier, I have yet to meet someone that purposefully makes mistakes or fails. If someone on my team, in my organization, in my family, continues to make the same mistakes or failures, it isn't that they don't want to do it properly, rather they must not understand how the successful skill is performed or what it looks like. As a coach, trainer, teammate, friend, boss, or parent that holds themselves 100% accountable, there is something that can be said, or done that will help them understand why they continue to make the mistake or fail. If this person still continues to make that same mistake or same failure and they are holding themselves 100% accountable, it is not simply that they can't learn it (fixed mindset). It must be, what was said or done by the coach, trainer, teammate, friend, boss, or parent, was a mistake or failure, and the two must continue to work together to figure out the solution to the problem.

Understanding the different types of skills that are involved with achieving result-oriented goals is also vital. Habits and skills can be synonymous. Behaviors such as avoiding things that one is likely to fail in is one of the most important skills to master, and stems from the fear of failure. Figuring out exactly what set of skills one needs to become successful in a given domain is one thing, and then actually setting out in acquiring those skills is another, it takes time and effort, and is much tougher to do alone. Quality, coaching, training, teaching, and parenting is paramount in these endeavors. One should always seek out the knowledge and wisdom from those who have already gotten to where they are headed.

Proper goal setting can make this process more efficient and effective. Figuring out what the larger outcome goal is, then breaking it down into smaller process goals and fixating on those will help you focus on the actions needed to achieve it.

Finally, after reading this, I hope you recognize that as a trainer my goal is not to make professional, or college soccer players. My intention is to train my athletes to become highly skilled learners with the mindsets and understanding that will allow them to acquire any skill they desire, and to become elite in whatever profession or domain they set their mind to.

## A True Master Will Always See Themselves As A Student

P.S.

This guide is by no means exhaustive, there have been many things integral in mastering skills not discussed here. My hope is to continue revising this guide as time goes on, but this should serve as a fantastic back bone of which to develop through. Also I take no credit for the information presented in this guide. The research and information provided is from peer reviewed research but in the sake of expediting the process of getting it into your hands I have left out the references section for now. I will be completing this part of the process as well, for my aim is to publish this for the masses.