

Secret to Success: 10 Rules of Engagement (ROEs)

The following ten ROEs were created to assist the warrior athlete in the quest to reach optimum performance. It is important to review these ROEs when developing your own plans for performance optimization to ensure lasting success.

Rule #1: “Figure out where you’re at before you start”

Being in a rush to fix things in your program without forethought or a well-formulated plan can lead to mistakenly fixing things that aren’t broken and neglecting to fix things that are. The results are failed attempts, temporary gains, broken spirits, and reluctance towards future attempts.

Strategy: Think holistic (defined as parts taken collectively as a whole) and examine your entire network of human systems. Recognize the system(s) that enhance you and the ones that decrease your performance. Once identified, select one at a time to work on and focus your resources towards strengthening that area before moving to the next.

→When performance declines, review this rule again.

Rule #2: “Don’t let your environment control you...take ownership”

Stop blaming other people and circumstances for poor performance and lack of control. Too often phrases such as “my squad leader gets me spun up” or “he gives me a headache” signal a forfeiture of personal control. No person or circumstance can “make you” feel, think, or react a certain way without your consent.

Strategy: Examine how often each day you experience poor performance or loss of control. Are you giving your control to other people or circumstances? If so, move towards taking it back by identifying your contribution to the outcome. Only when you accept responsibility can you gain control of the outcome.

Rule #3: “If it doesn’t work, stop doing it”

If you’re fishing and not getting a bite, when do you change your bait? For most, this is a no-brainer. In fact, many fishermen use specific bait depending on environmental conditions and the type of fish they’re trying to catch. Furthermore, they have a variety of other baits to use if the first does not work.

Strategy: Examine whether your efforts are getting the results you want in each area of performance. Are they working? If not, STOP and find something that does work. Develop your own program, and once you’ve found something that works, write it down. Don’t stop...keep going and find another. Build your own tool kit.

Rule #4: “Start small, go slowly, and be patient”

Failing to meet intended performance goals can come as a result of starting too fast and setting unrealistic expectations. For instance, because you were a track star in high school 20 years ago

doesn't necessarily mean you can still perform at that level, especially if you have put on some weight and haven't exercised since then.

Strategy: Start with what you CAN do...not used to do. Set small, realistic goals that are challenging yet doable. Most of all, tackle one thing at a time. Incorporating small changes one or two at a time into your lifestyle will ensure they become permanent additions.

Rule #5: “Practice, practice, practice”

Think about how easy it is to perform a task that you do every day such as driving, writing, or even speaking. Performing these things in your own way for such a long time can make them feel “automatic” or “natural.” “Muscle memory”—where there is no thinking involved—is developed over time for both good and bad habits. Old behaviors acquired over the years can't be undone overnight—it takes time, patience, and commitment.

Strategy: Once you have identified a new strategy for use, write it down, put it into practice, monitor it for success, and practice it daily. Be consistent.

Rule #6: “Set up an environment that supports your new plan”

As you start to engage in your new strategies and make changes, you will find that things and people around you may not have made the changes that you did. At this point you will be faced with two choices: (1) You can choose to return to your old lifestyle and level of performance, or (2) you can continue improving your performance and enhancing your quality of life.

Strategy: Creating a system to support new changes may not always be easy, but it can be accomplished in a number of ways—through fostering support from buddies or family members (talk to them about changes and specific ways they can support you), developing a routine that works for you (time your routine so that it doesn't take away from higher priorities), and/or joining groups that help you accomplish your goals (e.g., a running club).

Rule #7: “Bring in the experts and educate yourself”

Even the world's best athletes have trainers and consultants at their disposal to assist them in honing their skills and preparing for competition. Lance Armstrong has a 20-man team that helps him prepare for each race. Together they determine the best strategy (e.g., equipment, training, nutrition, etc.) after researching the course environment (e.g., terrain, length, altitude, etc.). Experts customize and create programs that enable athletes to reach their full potential.

Strategy: Find experts who can assist you in your quest for optimal performance. Interview them and select the ones who can help you to reach your goal. One way to get education from experts is to explore other areas of HPRC's website, where experts in Human Performance Optimization have contributed valuable information that can help you develop your own performance optimization plans.

Rule #8: “Don't get caught off guard...have a game plan”

The only constant in the military is change; those of you who have been in a while know this is true. World athletes too experience constant change in their lives. They always prepare for a number of possible factors in their competitions (e.g., climate, conditions, etc.) and adjust accordingly.

Strategy: Once you develop strategies to optimize your performance, work to maintain them in times of change and transition. Plan for upcoming changes or transitions in advance and adjust accordingly to sustain your gains.

Rule #9: “Write it down and review it daily”

Keeping a journal or a log is a key aspect in any athletic training program. Coaches use them to record the stats and progress of their players. Weightlifters use them to track the amount of weight pushed at each session. Even professional sharpshooters use logs to track environmental conditions and positioning. Once you find strategies that work, journaling and logging are key ways to keep you on target.

Strategy: Choose a strategy to ensure that you track and write down the specifics (e.g., day, time, quantity, equipment, back-up plan, etc.) of each training session. Review your notes at the beginning and end of each day, looking for what works, what improved, and what adjustments should be made.

Rule #10: “Be vigilant. Once you got it, don’t lose it”

Athletes all over the world have come across this rule at least once in their lifetime. Once they make the changes and reach their optimal level of performance, they start to drop their guard or cut corners and sacrifice the integrity of what they achieved. Old habits return, and performance and resiliency degradation begins.

Strategy: Be vigilant and make optimal performance a priority in your life. Create a lifestyle that supports a higher level of performance and make it permanent through dedication and repetition. If you drop it, pick it back up and get back on target.

One Shot One Kill (OSOK-IP)