



Dojo Digest: Next Year's Wins

It's nearly time to tune up and play Auld Lang Syne... but before you do, whether you've had a year filled with piping triumphs, challenges, or a mix of both, this time of year is the perfect moment to reflect and reset your piping intentions for the coming year.

Celebrate Your Wins

First things first, let's take a moment to appreciate your achievements this past year. Did you finally nail that tricky tune? Maybe you competed for the first time (or for the hundredth time but got some great feedback or impressive hardware to take home), mastered an embellishment you've been working on, or inspired someone with your playing. Big or small, these wins matter. Write them down and note the date so you can come back to them later and see how far you've come. Reflecting on what went well during the year will build your confidence and give your future self some ammunition to remember you why you love piping if you hit a wall a few days or months from now.

Learn from Your Losses

We all have moments we'd rather forget — missed notes, reeds that wouldn't cooperate, or performances that didn't go as planned. Instead of dwelling on them, think about what you learned. Each misstep is a stepping stone to improvement. Ask yourself: what went wrong?

What did I learn about myself and my piping progress from this?

What could I do differently next time?

Also remember the "power of yet" — don't think of failures as embarrassing missteps (after all, even the world's best players faced the same issues as you at some stage in their progress); instead, use "yet" to reframe them as positive learning experiences. "I didn't get that embellishment right — yet", "I can't tune properly — yet", "I can't play in public without making mistakes from the nerves — yet."

Applying these tactics will help you turn setbacks into fuel for growth.

Set Goals for 2024

I know, I know — New Year's resolutions can feel daunting or pointless, but the reason most resolutions fail is because they're too big or vague to possibly ever stick to. So let's keep it simple. Choose one or two goals that you'd like to achieve with your piping this year, and keep them specific and realistic.

Important: then you need to actually plan out a systematic process to achieve them. Maybe you want to compete in your first solo competition, focus on perfecting a specific piece of music, or dedicate more time to tuning your drones to perfection.

Whatever you choose, write it down and break it into small, realistic, manageable steps (for example, if you're time poor, don't pencil in a two-hour daily practice session on the roster!). Schedule those steps out on your calendar, make your daily piping practice a routine, set up a practice space that is completely free from distractions, and most importantly of all, actually just start doing it every single day. Progressing toward these goals will keep you motivated throughout the year.

(Another hot tip: at a minimum make sure you allow some time each day to listen to some great bagpipe music to improve your immersion – I promise this simple but highly enjoyable "task" will remind you why you love to do this, inspire you with new tunes or old bangers that you love listening to, and build your innate sense of what kind of piping to aspire to!)

Stay Connected

Piping is more than just music; it's community. Share your goals with friends, your band mates, or even on social media. The accountability often helps, and you might inspire someone else to set their own goals too. Plus, it's always more fun to celebrate successes together when your smart, systematic approach to progress pays off.

Here's to another fun year of music, progress, and unforgettable moments!

Best wishes,

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