

Setting SMART Goals

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It's very easy for students to focus on the details of their everyday lives and lose sight of their larger, long-term goals. But the process of setting goals allows you to take charge of your life as a student, to recognize your accomplishments, and to appreciate your achievements.

Why Set Goals?

Studies have shown that people who set goals for themselves are more likely to

- experience less stress and anxiety.
- concentrate and remember more effectively.
- demonstrate greater self-confidence.
- perform better and achieve more.
- be happier and more satisfied.

What are SMART goals?

SMART stands for the five components of a goal: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-Oriented, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-Bound.

The act of thinking carefully about what you want to achieve and determining a clear course of action will give you a better understanding of what your goals are and how you can achieve them.

SPECIFIC. Do you need to finish a particular assignment? Can you break a larger task down into smaller items? Specific goals are goals that state exactly **what** you want to achieve.

MEASURABLE. How many pages? Questions? Laps? Establish clear definitions to help you know if you're reaching (or have reached) your goal. If you're confused about how to measure your goal, you'll be less likely to achieve it.

ACTION-ORIENTED. How many verbs are associated: reading, typing, writing, making? This is the **how** part of goal setting. Describe your goals using action verbs, and outline the exact steps you will take to accomplish your goal.

REALISTIC. Can you do this in the time given? Give yourself the opportunity to succeed by setting goals you'll be able to accomplish. Strive to reach a good middle-ground: goals set too high could discourage you, but goals set too low will fail to challenge and motivate you.

TIME-BOUND. When will you know that you're finished? Decide exactly **when** you'll start and finish your goal. Knowing exactly how long you have to reach your goal is an excellent way to stay motivated and focused.

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Example of a SMART Goal

General goal: get an 'A' in _____ (specific class)

SMART goal:

- S** I will read and understand the process of osmosis in Chapter 5.
- M** I will answer all the study questions at the end of Chapter 5.
- A** I will Preview, Read, Recall the entire chapter and make flashcards
- R** I will focus on for this assignment from 7 to 9 pm on Wednesday. I have all of the necessary resources.
- T** I'll finish the assignment by 10pm so I can watch The Simpsons.

Now, *you* try a SMART goal:

S _____

M _____

A _____

R _____

T _____

Additional Goal Setting Tips

- Figure out an organizational system for setting and keeping track of your goals. Remember: this sort of thing is highly personal, so what works for someone else might not work well for you.
- Set hierarchies. Be sure to express your goals in order of importance, with the most important goal first on the list. Try arranging by *must* do, *should* do, *could* do.
- Avoid using the word **try** when you set your goals. Be positive! And believe you can succeed without hedging your bets from the start.
- Write your goals on paper, in your PDA, or create a computer document for them. The process of choosing words to express your goals allows you to personalize them and commit yourself to them. It will also help you to stay on top of them.
- Post your goals somewhere you'll see them several time each day.