

Have you ever set goals for yourself, but unfortunately never achieved those goals? Meeting goals can be challenging. Many of us may attribute our inability to achieve goals due to lack of trying, perhaps thinking, "I just didn't try hard enough." However, the real reason most of us do not achieve our goals is actually a result of not defining our goals well enough. Writing goals that are S.M.A.R.T. will allow you to master goal setting so that your goals are clearly defined and expectations are transparent.

1. What are Goals?

Goals act as a plan that helps us define where we want to go and the results we want see. Setting goals helps us focus our attention with competing forces and tasks so that we stay "on track". When goals are defined, specific, and measurable they help drive action in success. When goals are well defined, it allows us to achieved larger goals in a sequence, often one milestone at a time.

2. Why Do We Need Goals?

If goals are too vague, unrealistic, broad, difficult to measure, or lack a targeted completion timeline, you are placed at a disadvantage.

To write effective goals, we must first understand: What you are supposed to or want to do, how to do it, and by when to be successful.

3. How Do I Write Goals?

Whenever we set goals for ourselves, it is important to think of what the big picture is. What do we hope to earn or gain long term and what are the smaller milestones to accomplish the long-term goal?

4. What is a S.M.A.R.T. Goal?

Not SMART: "Improve my GPA."

SMART: "Improve my GPA from a 2.87 to a 3.25 by the end of next term by attending at least one tutoring session in Biology per week and spending an extra hour on each assignment."

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Check-List

Specific What makes this goal specific?

- Goal is clearly stated.
- Goal describes a function/behavior to be performed.
- Goal uses action verbs to describe what has to be done.

Measurable How can this goal be measured?

- Is the goal quantified?
- Are limits and parameters for the goal defined?
- Are the results something anyone could observe?

Attainable Is the goal within reach?

- There is a required degree of experience.
- The necessary skills and knowledge are realistic to achieve.
- I have the ability to obtain resources necessary to complete the goal.

Relevant How do you know this goal is relevant to the work to be done?

- There is a clear relationship between the goals I have set for myself and my department or long-term goal.
- My goals are aligned with my job or long-term goal.
- My goals will help me achieve development that is specific to my career plans.

Timeframe When will this goal be completed?

- The completion date is clearly defined.
- The duration given to complete milestones to reach my goals are clearly defined.
- The frequencies of specific behaviors/tasks that will occur to complete the goals are clearly articulated.