

goal setting

Objective: Yogi Berra may have explained the importance of goal setting best when he said, "If you don't know where you are going, you might not get there." Use this activity to learn about goals and how to set them using the SMART goal setting strategy.

How to get it done:

1. Read the following information about goal setting. Complete the activity and review your goal with your advisor.

What are goals?

Quite simply put, goals are targets or objectives that we want to achieve. They are different in their intensity than wishes or wants and as such are more tangible, more actionable, more measurable and more achievable. Having clearly defined and written goals will help you to be more successful.

Why have goals?

People with goals achieve more than those without goals. We can all think of examples of highly successful people such as a successful sports personality. Do you think that any of them have succeeded without a clear and specific goal of what they want to achieve?

People with goals are more likely to achieve their goals than those without clear goals. It seems obvious that if you know exactly what you want it is far easier to achieve it than if you are vague or ambiguous but the truth is even more pronounced than that. Think of all of the people that you know who would like to achieve something but their goals are not big or clear enough and thus they constantly end up failing?

If you have a clearly written and specific goal it is relatively easy to create a structured action plan to achieve it.

In the 1950's a Yale University study did some research on the results of goal setting. The results they discovered over a 20 year period were astounding. 20 years later when they investigated the success of the graduates, they found that the 3% of graduates with clearly written goals in the 1950's were worth more in terms of wealth than the other 97% put together.

Reviewing your goals

Review goals weekly. There is little point setting goals unless you review them regularly to see if you have made the necessary steps and to assess your progress.

Weekly is a good time period for reviewing your goals. Daily is better. As with many disciplines the philosophy of "little and often" gains the best results. Reviewing your goals as often as daily will allow you to regularly monitor and steer your progress with a minimal amount of time.

New Year's resolutions don't work. If you need any proof that reviewing is essential then consider how soon in the New Year most people give up their resolutions! There are many reasons for this - lack of commitment to the goal and the goals not being SMART tested are two - but one of the primary ones is that people rarely or never review these resolutions to assess their progress. Reviewing is a very quick progress and should only take 5-10 minutes.

Write It Down!

Written goals greatly increase your chances of success. Simply thinking about your goals is not enough, you must write them down. Doing so will greatly improve your chances of success.

How to set SMART goals

When setting goals it is important that they match certain criteria. Simply saying, "I want to be rich!" or, "I want a nice car!" is not enough. The SMART goal setting strategy has been created to help you write a goal that you can accomplish.

Specific. A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. Make sure the goal says what you want to achieve. The goal needs to be as detailed as possible. "I want a brand new, red Porsche 911 with grey leather seats and a Clarion stereo!" not, "I want a flash car!"

Poor Example: "Get a good grade in math."

Better Example: "I am going to get a 'B' in my Algebra class."

Measurable. Goals need to be measurable so that you know when you have succeeded. Determine the criteria for success and when you will reach your goal. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as: "How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?"

Poor Example: "I want to get a 'B' in Algebra someday."

Better Example: "I want to get a 'B' in Algebra by the end of the first semester."

Achievable. Goals need to be challenging but they also need to be realistic. If you set goals that are unachievable you will always be unmotivated and unhappy.

Good Example: "A math test is coming up and you want 80% on the test, so you make your goal to learn the material so that you can explain it to others and do well on the test."

Relevant / Realistic. The goal has to mean something to you. You need an emotional tie with the goal. Without this you will have difficulties finding the motivation to drive your efforts. You should also assess the resources you have available to you and make sure that the goal is realistic.

Timely. All goals must be timed. You need a start date and an end date. If the goal is huge then you may well need smaller goals to break the tasks down and each of these must match the SMART criteria and therefore must be timed. Develop time frames that allow you to be able to accomplish your goals and meet any deadlines. Look at your goals and work backwards so that each smaller goal works toward the larger goal.

Good Example: "I am going to study everyday after school, and pass my math tests to earn a 'B' in Algebra by the end of the first semester."


Extra Ideas

- Tell your goals to others so they can help you reach them.
- Develop study teams with common goals so you can work together.
- Celebrate your successes and look back often to see your growth.

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write in this column



Write a short-term (6 - 12 months) SMART goal	
1. To help get you started, circle an area in which you want to achieve something:	Education Athletics Health & Fitness Family Other: _____
2. Based on that area, write a short term goal using the SMART goal setting strategy:	
3. Set a starting and ending date.	start date: _____ end date: _____
Action Plan for accomplishing your goal	
4. Identify people and groups to work with in achieving your goal.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
5. List obstacles to overcome.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
6. List the skills and knowledge needed to reach your goal.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
7. What are the steps necessary to accomplish your goal?  Review goals weekly. There is little point setting goals unless you review them regularly to see if you have made the necessary steps and to assess your progress.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
8. How will you manage your goal?	