



SMART Goal Setting Instructions

Improving your performance as a student is a noble goal, but take the time to do it right. Think about how to set goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely, and you find that achieving your goals is an easier task than you thought. Knowing how to set goals is an important skill for students, and one that you will need in the working world.

As a college student, what are your goals? Do you know specifically what you would like to achieve, or do you have vague goals such as "doing well in class" or "raising my GPA"?

What are SMART goals? Follow the SMART model of goal setting.

Specific: First, goals need to be specific. That is, you need to spell out exactly what you want to accomplish. Vague goals can feel overwhelming and unachievable. For example, "I'm going to be a better person," is vague, and someone who sets this goal may not even know where to start. Instead, it's better to set specific steps such as, "I'm going to volunteer twice a month," or "I'm going to be more patient with my family."

The same is true for school goals. "I'm going to study better," is too vague and overwhelming. Be specific. Goals such as "I will set aside three hours every weeknight to do nothing other than my school work" or "I will start my papers at least one week before the deadline," are less overwhelming because they call for a specific task.

Measurable: Successful goals also need to be measurable or else there is no way to determine if you have achieved them. For example, "I'm going to lose weight" is a popular goal that works better with a measurable outcome such as "I'm going to lose 15 pounds by September."

Setting measurable goals as a student can be easy because you're surrounded by measurements. Instead of "I'm going to get better grades," try, "I am going to raise my GPA to a 3.0 by the end of the year," or "I'm going to get at least a B in all of my classes this semester."

Achievable: When setting goals, it's important to choose ones that you are actually capable of attaining. Eliminate impossible or highly unlikely objectives. "I'm going to bench press 300 pounds" may be a goal that is physical impossible. "I'm going to be in the NBA" is a goal that's possible, but highly unlikely.

Keep this in mind with student goals. "I'm going to graduate in the top 10 percent of my class" may be impossible if it's junior year and you only have a 2.8. "I'm going to get a 4.0 this semester," may be highly unlikely if you're your taking lots of extra credits and all your classes are upper level."

Relevant: Goals should be set with the "big picture" in mind and should have a clear purpose. If you're trying to build a table, relevant goals include sanding the wood and carving the legs. If you get side tracked and spend several days shopping for the perfect china, your goal of building a table will be slowed down. China to put on the table would be nice, but this is not relevant to your overall goal.

The same is true with student goals. If your goal is to ace a calculus test that's three days away, don't get started on a paper that's not due for another week, and don't decide that's it's time to organize your closet. Stay focused.

Timely: Finally, it's important to set goals that you actually have time to complete. Losing 20 pounds might be a good idea, but not if you want to do that in three weeks. Planting a garden might be nice, but not if the first frost is due soon.

As a student, be realistic about what you have time to accomplish. Writing a senior honor's thesis might be a good idea, but not if you also have an internship, a part time job, and lots of other obligations. Taking on an ambitious group project topic might sound like a good idea, but not if you only have a few weeks to get the work done.

In using this method, you will be able to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely goals.

For example: For the upcoming year, you want to set a few professional skill development goals. You have indicated public speaking as a gap area needed for improvement. Your goal: Improve my public speaking skills. This goal does not satisfy the SMART requirements. How can you make the goal specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely?

An example goal using the SMART goal technique:

Develop public speaking skills by delivering three training presentations to group members during organizational meetings by end of the academic year.



SMART Goal Setting Worksheet

Use the table below to form your SMART goals. Include as much detail as possible under each heading in the columns.

Intention	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Timely
What is it that you want to achieve?	Who? What? When? Why? Where?	How much? How often? How many?	Attainable? Realistic?	Is it important to what you want to achieve ultimately?	When?
Example: Improve my public speaking skills.	Present training to members of my student organization; 1x/month at org meetings	3 presentations or 1x/month for a year	Yes, I am spreading the responsibility of developing the skill throughout the entire year.	Communication - giving presentations is a skill sought by a company where I want to intern.	By the end of the academic year

Phrasing your SMART goals

In the spaces below, develop a statement defining your specific goal, incorporating as many of the elements you worked on above as possible into the statement. This will include the actions you plan to take to meet this goal, your timeline, and how will it meet your personal goal you are addressing. Also, indicate what types of additional skills and resources are necessary to facilitate the goal.

Example:

Develop public speaking skills by delivering three training presentations to group members during organizational meetings by end of the academic year. Action steps: 1. Identify key topics and information to train and present to organization members by September 30, 2012; 2. Create presentations based on the identified training topics by October 31, 2012; 3. Practice the presentations before presenting the information to the group members by October 31, 2012; and 4. Deliver training to organization members in November, January, and March meetings.

By developing this skill, I will enhance the communication skill sought by the company where I want to work after graduation. I will be able to better articulate a specific example of using the skill.

Practice using presentation tools – PowerPoint, and Prezi

GOAL 1:

GOAL 2:

GOAL 3: