



# Setting SMART goals

SMART goals not only help you experience less anxiety, but also concentrate and remember more effectively, feel greater self-confidence, perform better and achieve more, as well as be happier and more satisfied. SMART is an acronym for the traits that make a goal effective: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and time-bound.

## What makes a goal SMART?

You do! Some goals are straightforward to achieve, while others can be complex and difficult to define. By thinking carefully about what you want to accomplish and determining a clear course of action, you'll have a better understanding of what your goals really are and how you can reach them.

### Specific

State exactly what you want to achieve. Depending on your goal, you may have to outline others that will be involved, places you need to go, or constraints to getting things done. If your goal is large or complex, break it up into smaller items so that each item corresponds with a specific action or step.

### Measurable

Establish clear definitions to help you measure if you're reaching your goal. How will you know if you're making progress toward achieving your goal? How can you check that you're staying on track? For example, an academic goal you could measure progress towards an academic goal with grades.

### Action-Oriented

Describe your goals using action verbs. This will ensure that your tasks are clear, which can help you accomplish your goal more easily. Check this for each specific item you outline.

### Realistic

Set goals you believe you can actually accomplish. If your goals are so ambitious that they impossible to reach, you

deny yourself the opportunity to succeed. At the same time, you don't want set the bar so low that achieving your goal won't be satisfying. Consider obstacles you may need to overcome and make an appropriately challenging goal

### Time-Bound

How much time do you have to complete the task? Decide exactly when you'll start and finish your goal. A complex goal might require more approximate time limits at first, then develop specific deadlines as time goes on. For example, someone preparing for a career in public health might plan to do an internship in the fall and start applying for graduate schools the following spring. As time goes on, the dates for completing these tasks would become more concrete.

#### Example 1:

I'm going to read Chapter 5 and answer the ten practice questions at the end of the chapter. This assignment is due on Thursday, so I'll preview and read the chapter by Wednesday. This will give me enough time to work on the homework from 7-9 p.m. so I can watch a movie with my friends at 10 p.m.

#### Example 2:

I'm going to take care of myself by getting more sleep, so I'm going to make a point of going to bed by 10 p.m. I'm going to make a plan to spread my work out over the week, so I can finish my tasks by 9 p.m. This plan will give me an hour to wind down, so I can get quality sleep, which will help me be better rested for class each day.

**Now take a goal of your own and make it SMART:**

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### Next steps

Now that you have a solid SMART goal, it's important to break your overall goal down into smaller actionable parts. Focusing on small actions over time helps you stick to your bigger goal without feeling overwhelmed. Break your goal down into chunks of time to identify what you want to accomplish over the next few days and weeks. Each action of each day is a step toward fulfilling your goal.

SHORT TERM						
in 4 weeks						
next 2 weeks						
this week						
today						

LONG TERM						
this year						
semester						
one month						
this week						