

The 5-Minute Guide To Setting a S.M.A.R.T. Goal

- SPECIAL REPORT -

Knowing what you want from life and knowing how to phrase that desire is one of the most important and powerful things you can learn in order to start getting more from life.

When you have a goal, it gives you a blueprint, a trajectory, and a road map. Now all you have to do is to follow that map in order to find your way to that end destination and really... anything is possible.

This is what is missing for so many people. So many of us have that uneasy feeling that life could be better, that we aren't 100% content with the status quo and yet we have no idea how to make it better. Why? Apart from anything else, we don't know what we want!

How can you get what you want, if you don't know what that is?

And beyond that, it's also just as important to know how to actually go about *phrasing* what we want. This makes a huge difference and greatly improves or reduces our likelihood of actually *achieving* that thing.

Because there's another scenario that is arguably even worse than not making any progress because we don't know what we want. And that is that we *do* make progress, we *do* achieve our goals... but then we realize that the thing we've accomplished was never really what we wanted at all!

This guide will show you how to ensure that doesn't happen. It will teach you to write effective goals and then follow them through to completion.

The Acronym

To address these issues and to ensure that you are following the right types of goal, we are going to be using an acronym to help guide us through what we need to do to create the best goals. This acronym is 'SMART'. We are going to look at how to go about writing goals the S.M.A.R.T. way...

SMART stands for:

Specific, Significant, Stretching

Measurable, Meaningful, Motivational

Agreed upon, Attainable, Achievable, Acceptable

Realistic, Relevant, Rewarding, Results-Oriented

Time-Based, Time-Bound, Timely, Tangible, Trackable

Follow these maxims, ensure that your goals meet these criteria and you can be sure that you will achieve your goals and get the end results you're hoping of.

Sounds great I'm sure but what precisely does all that mean? How do these words apply to your goal setting? And how can you be sure you're on the right track? Let's take a more in-depth look at each step...

Specific, Significant, Stretching

So starting with 'S', what do we mean by 'specific'? Actually, this is one of THE most important considerations when writing a goal.

A goal should be specific in that it must not be vague. In other words, it's no good saying that you want to be 'rich' in 2 years, or you want to lose weight in 3 years. That's because a vague goal makes it all too easy to make excuses and isn't measurable.

Let's say you want to be rich in two years... how do you decide if you're on track for that goal in one year? And how much more money do you need to make? Likewise, losing weight is too vague, as is being happier.

Think of a tangible result because that way, you can work backward and create solid stepping stones to reaching that point.

A significant goal meanwhile means 'dream big'. The bigger your goal, the more excited it will make you and the better you will be able to follow through with it and make it happen.

This is something that a lot of people don't understand and it will often seem counter-intuitive. Surely smaller goals are easier to follow through with?

The problem with that, is that if a goal is small, you'll find you actually struggle to stick with it because you won't be that bothered by it. And as some big thinkers in this field point out, having a BIG

idea makes it much easier to get other people on-board and excited too.

Finally, a stretching goal should be one that is something of a challenge. Actually, there is an ideal 'level' of challenge to consider here. That is to say that your perfect goal isn't going to be impossibly difficult but neither should it be highly easy. The ideal goal will be attainable but just difficult enough that you really have to reach for it. This is what keeps us most motivated and more specifically, what keeps us in a state of 'flow'.

Measurable, Meaningful, Motivational

A great goal should be measurable, meaning that you can measure your progress and see just how well you're doing at any point. By being able to measure your success, you can define how well you're doing and thereby decide if you need to make alterations or not.

In fact, the very best kinds of goals are 'pass/fail', meaning that you either accomplish them or you don't. By making a goal pass/fail, there is now no question of measuring, you either did it or you did not.

A goal should also be meaningful, meaning that it is personal to you and has an emotional resonance.

What's most important here is that you follow your heart. That might sound incredibly cheesy but it's actually one of the most important aspects of goal writing of all. Again, that is because a goal that is meaningful to you will be one that you have the best chance of actually following through with and sticking at.

More to the point though, a goal that is meaningful to you is the kind that you'll be happiest to accomplish. If you are chasing a goal that was set to you by the media, by your upbringing or otherwise by forces outside of your influence, then it will ring hollow and you won't feel fulfilled by accomplishing it.

Your goal also needs to be motivational. That means that it should be intrinsically motivating and should be something that you're excited to push for.

Part of this comes down to the way you visualize your goal – which is an important step. A great goal in this regard is one that you can picture, that you can feel and that you can almost taste.

A terrible and very 'non-motivational' example of a goal would be 'to get rich'. This is a bland and unexciting goal that is unlikely to motivate you. Conversely though, if you can really picture yourself on a beautiful yacht, living abroad and wearing the finest clothes then that will give you the emotional drive to get out there and make your dreams happen.

Agreed upon, Attainable, Achievable, Acceptable

Why must a dream be agreed upon? That might sound rather non-inspirational but the fact of the matter is that none of us are islands. If you want to go out and accomplish something, then you need the help of others. What's more, is that you need to acknowledge how the things you accomplish are going to affect others. What you achieve will impact on your partner, on your family, on your children and your friends. If your goal is to go travelling around the world, then that's something you should really speak to your wife or husband about first!

Of course a goal needs to be attainable and that means the same thing as being achievable. But what if your goal – the thing you want most with all your heart – in fact is not highly attainable? What if the thing you want most is to be an astronaut? And what if that is now looking rather difficult, seeing as you're too old to start learning?

What if the thing you want most is to be a rock star?

The answer is to look closer at that goal and to ask *why* you want it. Is there another way that you can sate this emotional craving? For example, if you want to be an astronaut then this might come down primarily to a desire to explore the stars. In that case, how about you become an astrophotographer instead?

Your goal also needs to be acceptable, meaning that it should be something that you (and your loved ones) can live with once you achieve it. That's similar to agreed upon but it means really thinking about the *reality* of your chosen goal. Because here's the thing: very often the way we envision a goal is very different from the reality once it happens. You might imagine yourself being a rock star and think about all the applause, all the adulation and all the fame.

But what about the part you're forgetting? What about the fact that you have to be away from home all the time? The fact that it will be hard to hold down a relationship?

Realistic, Relevant, Rewarding, Results-Oriented

Your goal must of course be realistic. That means that you need to really think about your current skills and resources and aim from there.

That is to say, you need to be strategic and you need to take the 'path of least resistance'. If you want to start a business, then think about your skill set and think about your networks of contacts.

A goal must be relevant, in that it has to actually take you closer to the future that you have dreamed. This is crucial because sometimes the goals we write can end up being little more than delay tactics – a way for us to put-off doing the things we need to do to accomplish what we want to accomplish.

A good goal should be intrinsically rewarding. That means that it should be rewarding to actually *carry out* and not only to achieve. In other words, the goal of getting into shape will work best if you can work out in a way that you *enjoy*.

And being a wealthy lawyer will only work if the act of actual *law-
yering* is something that appeals to you.

Results oriented means that your goal is all about getting results. The best goals manage to be rewarding *by* giving you constant feedback and by letting you see the benefits of all your hard work.

Getting into shape is a good example because you can actually see your muscles grow and waist shrink. The same goes for earning money. But whatever you do, make sure that there is a way that you can get positive feedback on what you're doing to keep you moving forward.

Time-Based, Time-Bound, Timely, Tangible, Trackable

Time based, time bound and timely...

In other words, your goal needs to be something that is tied to time. But this isn't going to work the way you think it is.

That is to say, a time-based goal is not going to be one that states you must make \$10,000 in 3 months.

Instead, a time-based goal is one that says you must make \$277 a day, every day.

So we're talking short term time here, so that you can measure the results immediately and get that instant 'pass/fail'. In other words, you shouldn't be thinking ahead but focussed right here on the present. Give yourself a task to accomplish and then make sure that you keep moving toward it by measuring the result on a pass/fail basis each day.

Over time, you should get closer and closer to the results you want. And if you get this right, then the overarching aims will take care of themselves.

This is also how you make your goal tangible and trackable. These are tiny steps that you commit yourself to make every single day.

How do you lose weight? You work out for 15 minutes at least, every day.

How do you write a best selling novel? You write a single page, every single day.

How do you find your dream job? You make three applications a week.

Take small steps and they will eventually add up to that amazing end-goal that you've been fixed on.