

Setting Goals

What is a goal?

According to psychologists, there are two types of goals: **objective goals**, which focus on attaining a specific standard of proficiency on a task, usually within a specified time (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 705) and **subjective goals**, which are general statements of intent like, “I want to get good grades” or “I want to be a better athlete.” Goals can be **short-term**, that is, ones you will achieve in the near future: within a day or within a week, or possibly within a few months. **Long-term goals** are those that you will achieve over a longer period of time such as over one semester or a year. ***As a student, most of your goal setting will be related to getting course work completed for your classes each semester. For this purpose, you will be focusing primarily on objective and short-term goals.***

How do I set goals?

The ability to meet goals largely depends on you regulating your behavior during an extended, yet discrete period of time--a skill you can develop like building endurance to run a marathon. You will have to be “smart” relative to how you go about setting your goals or you will be unable to reach them in the allotted amount of time you designate for your studying each day. You will have to figure out how to break your goals into **objectives** (smaller steps to achieve your short-term goal). Goals and objectives should be SMART:

Specific: articulated in a clear and simple statement, such as, “complete problems 1-25 on page 149 in math, and check my work. “

Measurable: for a goal to be reached, you have to be able to measure it along the way. A goal should have a clear beginning and end point. For example, read pages 50-75 in philosophy. You will need to check your progress. For instance, after fifteen minutes of sustained reading in philosophy, how many pages have I read? Am I up to page 65 yet?

Attainable: you have to be realistic. Under most circumstances, optimism is helpful, but if you set a goal of reading two chapters in economics in an hour, this objective is most likely overly optimistic and unattainable.

Relevant: your objective must match up with your end goal. If your end goal is to complete a draft of a paper, then working with a writing tutor on brainstorming examples to include in order to support your thesis is what you should be doing.

Time-based: sometimes it’s hard for individuals to predict how much time it will take to achieve a particular goal or objective. Once you’ve determined exactly what you will be doing in a daily study session, give yourself a time deadline to complete your task. For instance, you decide to study after dinner from 7:00 pm-9:00PM. Once you’ve reached your personal deadline of 9:00PM, assess what percentage of your goal has been completed.

How do I know whether the goals I set are SMART?

| Weak Objective | Strong Objective | Excellent Objective |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Read Economics | Read Chapter 3 in Economics | Read Chapter 3 in Economics, pages 152-179. Write a summary of the main topics from the chapter. Create a list of questions I was not clear about to discuss with my professor during office hours |
| Do Math Homework | Complete problems 1-25 on page 149 | Complete problems 1-25 on page 149. Take the practice test at the end of the chapter. Ask SA tutor to assist in reviewing problems I am unclear on. |
| Write paper for Liberal Arts Seminar | Review text for assignment and brainstorm thesis statement | Review text and jot down examples to use to support my ideas and thesis. Cross reference my examples with class discussion notes. Make a Writing Center appointment. |
| Study for French exam | Review chapters 5-9 for French exam. | Review chapter 5 on irregular verbs. Make a list of irregular verbs and conjugate them. |

What do I do when I am caught up on my work and don't have anything to do?

A basketball player can always improve his foul line percentage by practicing foul shots. Use this time to “practice.” Unless you have taken the last final exam for the semester, there is no such thing as “having nothing to do.” Simply put, **get ahead**. For every class you have, you have reading to do, so you can **get ahead**. You can check your planner to see what your next assignment is to **get ahead**. You can review your notes to **get ahead**. You can create a study guide for your next exam to **get ahead**. Simply put, use this time to **get ahead** and practice.

What if I get stuck and can't figure out how to set and meet my goals?

At most college and universities, there are a wide variety of services to help students with the goal setting process. These services are typically found in a Learning Assistance Center or a Counseling Center. A learning specialist or a tutor can help not only with your goal setting process, but also assist you on particular assignments in your classes. You can even solicit help from an academic advisor to help with mastering *smart* goal-setting

How long do I need to study? Of course the answer to this question depends on the kinds of short-term study goals that you have set for yourself; however, to be productive and go through the whole goal

setting process, you will need to spend a **minimum of one hour**. In general, two hours of sustained studying is the guideline before most individuals need a short break.

The Goal Setting Process

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Name: | Date: | Time: |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|

I affirm my commitment to “claiming my education.” _____(initial)

My long-term goal for my semester GPA is _____(initial)

In my effort to meet my long-term goal GPA, I will work on the following short-term goal and objectives during this study session:

| Subject | Goal/Objective | Projected Completion Time | Actual Time | Complete Estimate % |
|---------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

In order to meet my projected goals, I will need:

_____to meet with my professor during his/her office hours (external)

_____a one-on-one tutor (external)

_____to learn new and/or more effective study strategies (internal/external)

_____increase my interest in the subject matter (internal)

_____figure out a way to motivate myself to stick to my plan (internal)

_____to adjust my attitude/mindset (internal)

_____other? Please explain

Were you able to meet your projected goals during this study session? If not, what obstacles got in the way?

_____ I did not have enough time (external)

_____ My time projections were not accurate (internal)

_____ I did not understand the content of the assignment (internal)

_____ I was unable to focus/sustain motivation (internal)

_____ I was unable to get help from a tutor (external)

_____ my motivation (internal)

_____ attitude/mindset (internal)

_____ Other, please explain

What is your plan between now and the next time you sit down to study, to work on removing the obstacles that may have gotten in your way?