

Academic Goal Setting for Success

Setting realistic goals and accomplishing goals is the key to achieving and maintaining academic success. Ultimately, goals should provide direction and motivation to succeed academically.

There are generally two types of goals, short-term goals and long-term goals.

- Short-term goals are goals to be achieved soon (i.e., in a week or two).
- Long-term goals are to be achieved down the road (i.e., by the end of the term.)

If goals are not clear, or measurable, the effort put towards achieving goals will lack direction and focus. In preparing for academic goals, follow “**The Three W’s of Goals**”.

The Three W’s of Goals

1. **WRITE** –The number one key to accomplishing any goal is committing the goal to writing. Writing goals down forces the person to clarify what is to be accomplished and provides the motivation to take action steps toward achieving those goals.
2. **WHAT** – Vague goals that lack focus and are not measurable, are ineffective and difficult to accomplish. Each goal set should state exactly what is to be accomplished.
3. **WHEN** –Goals without deadlines are not realistic and are far less likely to be achieved. Setting a realistic deadline forces the student to think about what it will take to accomplish the goal, helps prioritize what work must be done to achieve the goal, and pushes the student to stay on pace so that the goal comes to fruition.

An example of an appropriate goal might be the following: *I will begin researching topics for (what you will do) my psychology class by October 3 (when you will accomplish the goal).*

Good goals are S-M-A-R-T:

1. **Specific** – Write your goal, *What* is going to be accomplished, and by *When*
2. **Measurable** - A goal to improve performance in Math is an example of an ineffective goal. Setting a goal to get an A on the next Math exam to move the grade from 75% to 83% is a measurable goal that is achievable and realistic.
3. **Attainable** - Make sure the goals set push the student to excel but are well within his/her skill set and ability to accomplish.
4. **Relevant and Realistic** - Setting a goal to get straight A’s when approaching the end of the semester and failing most classes may not be realistic. A realistic goal may be to pass all classes.
5. **Timely but Flexible**. Rigid goals that cannot be modified if circumstances change are ineffective. Better to set goals that allow the achievement of some success even if the entire goal cannot be achieved.



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Loveless, Becton. "Study Skills for Students", January 2024, Education Corner,
<https://www.educationcorner.com/study-skills/>. Accessed 3 July 2024