

# Go for the Goal

## Goal Setting

### Objectives:

- A** Explain the benefits of goal setting.
- B** Describe the goal-setting process.



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The great American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "The world makes way for the man who knows where he is going."

What do you think of this statement? How does it relate to setting goals? The truth is, a person who knows what s/he wants and sets out to get it is much more likely to achieve success than a person who doesn't have a plan.

Goal setting is more than just deciding what you want. It includes working to get it and measuring your progress along the way. Learn more about what goals are, what makes them work, and how you can benefit from setting them.

## Get in the Game: Why You Should Set Goals

Has anyone ever asked you:

- How much you'd like to be earning by the age of 25?
- What job position in the company you want to be promoted to?
- What you hope to accomplish professionally during your career?

If you can answer these questions, you've put some thought into the things you want for your future. You know what your desires are. But, do you know how to make them happen? You have to set goals!

### What goals are

A **goal** is an objective or want that you plan to fulfill—a specific outcome that you intend to work toward. When you have a goal, you plan to go in a particular direction toward a particular target. Goals, then, are not merely dreams or wishes for the future. Consider the difference between a *dream* to start your own company and a *goal* to start your own company. With a dream, you're just hoping it will happen someday. But, with a goal, you plan to take particular steps at particular times to *make* it happen.

► *You have to take the right steps to make your goal happen!*



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Read more about the difference between dreams and goals in the article “10 Big Differences Between Goals and Dreams That You Must Know” from TimeManagementNinja.com: <http://timemanagementninja.com/2013/04/10-big-differences-between-goals-and-dreams-that-you-must-know/>.

Goals are either short-term or long-term. **Short-term goals** are objectives that take less than a year to achieve, while **long-term goals** are objectives that take a year or more to reach. For example, a graphic designer might want to learn the basics of a new software package within the next six months—this is a short-term goal. That same designer may also want to earn a Master of Fine Arts degree. This is a long-term goal that may take several years to accomplish.



Check out “Long-Term and Short-Term Goals” from [iseek.org](http://www.iseek.org) to read a few more examples of long- and short-term goals: <https://www.iseek.org/mymncareers/finish-school/long-short-goals.html>.



▲ *When a goal takes a year or more to achieve, like earning a college degree, it’s considered a long-term goal.*

## Types of goals

As a specific target, a goal can be a performance goal or a learning goal. If you're evaluated on how *well* you do something, you're judged on your level of performance. When you receive a performance review at your job, you may receive a rating of 1–10 on several different job tasks that you're required to perform. Let's say one of those tasks is greeting customers who enter the store. At your last performance review, you received a 7 out of 10 on the rating scale. Your goal for your next performance review is to score at least a 9. This is a **performance goal**.

You can, however, achieve some performance goals without a formal evaluation of how well you've done. These goals are tasks you simply *complete*—crossing them off your list when you've finished. For example, if you've made a goal for yourself to complete 1,000 words of your manuscript today, and you complete 1,000 words, you've reached this performance goal even though you may not receive any outside feedback.

A **learning goal**, on the other hand, has to do with mastering a new skill. Remember the graphic designer who wanted to learn the basics of a new software package? She might decide she wants to go on to learn the software thoroughly and become an expert at using it. This is a learning goal she's set for herself, and she'll have completed it when she feels completely comfortable using the software.

Whatever type of goal you work toward, you should always *know* when you've achieved it.



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▲ *What type of goal are you climbing toward—a performance goal or a learning goal?*

## Characteristics of goals

Goals have some important qualities, or characteristics, that you should pay attention to. First, goals are **dynamic**, meaning that they can change. For example, you go to college with the intention of studying mechanical engineering but, after one year, you realize you don't enjoy it as much as you thought you would. You decide to switch to electrical engineering instead. You've changed your goal.

Second, goals can vary in scale, or degree of size. If you aspire to be a working writer, your career goals might include the following:

- ✓ Detail-level goal: Write something.
- ✓ Small-scale goal: Attend a fiction-writing workshop.
- ✓ Large-scale goal: Make a living as a writer.
- ✓ Grand-scale goal: Publish a best-selling novel.

In general, smaller scale goals are short-term goals, such as writing something or attending a fiction workshop. And larger scale goals are often long-term goals, such as being a self-sufficient writer or publishing a novel.



▲ *Did you decide to change your major from mechanical engineering to electrical engineering? That's okay—goals are dynamic!*

Goals, then, are dynamic and are described by how extensive they are and by how long it takes to accomplish them. But, what makes a *good* goal? In short, a *good* goal is both SMART and effective.

**SMART goals. SMART goals** are those that help you identify exactly what it is you want to achieve—and then know for sure when you’ve achieved it. Take a look at the components of SMART goals:

- S** — **S**pecific
- M** — **M**easurable
- A** — **A**ttainable
- R** — **R**esults-oriented
- T** — **T**ime-bound

**Specific.** Specific goals include the details necessary to make sure you don’t confuse them with other goals. They are purposely worded so that you know exactly *what* you will achieve. Your desire to become a successful salesperson should be expressed as, “I want to have the best sales numbers in the entire company.”

**Measurable.** Measurable goals can be counted or measured in some way. They are expressed in terms of time, distance, dollars, etc. For example, a goal of making 15 sales calls this week tells you *how many* as well as *when*.



▲ *Do you plan on making 15 sales calls this week?  
Your goal is measurable.*

**Attainable.** Attainable goals are able to be reached. In other words, they are realistic. A goal to become company president in your first year on the job is not realistic. A goal to qualify for more responsibilities at the end of your first year, however, is perfectly reachable.

**Results-oriented.** Goals that are results-oriented focus on getting something done, such as finishing your quarter-end reports a week early. These goals look to the outcome—and the performance that brings about that outcome. They are expressed in tangible terms, clearly answering the question, “How will I *know* if I’ve reached it?” In this case, you’ll have the completed reports in hand, ready to turn in to your supervisor.

**Time-bound.** Goals that are time-bound have a set time limit. You know when the goal begins, and you know when it ends. This means that you also know *when* to congratulate yourself for reaching it.

There are actually a few different versions of the SMART acronym, but they all contain important information about setting goals. For example, in some variations of SMART, the “R” stands for realistic or relevant. Why do you think these characteristics are important for goals? For more information about SMART goals, check out the article “5 Characteristics of Successful Goal Setting” by Anastasia Zoldak: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/5-characteristics-successful-goal-setting-22892.html>.



**Effective goals.** Effective goals are those that take priority over other activities. Putting your goals first can require you to make some tough choices. You might have to choose between your goal and a distraction. Consider the choices you would (or should) make in the following situations:

- **Goal:** You want to be well-prepared for your presentation tomorrow.  
**Distraction:** You have a sand volleyball game tonight in the league you've joined with your friends.
- **Goal:** You want to apply for at least five new jobs this week.  
**Distraction:** When you get online to search for jobs, you realize that you have a lot of emails to catch up on.
- **Goal:** You want to prove to your supervisor that you are ready for a promotion and more responsibility.  
**Distraction:** The vacation you want to take falls during the busiest time of the year for your company.

Even when the decisions are difficult, remember that *you* are the one who sets your goals, and *you* are the one who accomplishes them. Setting goals serves your own best interests in the end.

Overall, goal setting helps you to know what is important—and what isn't. It helps you to motivate yourself by providing a framework for achieving your objectives. And, when you're successful, it helps you to feel good about what you've accomplished.

## THE GRAY ZONE

Martin's manager has asked him to set several goals for himself during the next quarter. Martin will be evaluated on whether or not he meets these goals at his next performance review. Since he wants to do well on his performance review, and since his evaluation affects his chances for a raise, Martin is considering setting his goals a little lower than he thinks he can accomplish. That way, he will be sure to achieve all of them. What do you think? Is it ethical for Martin to lower his goals slightly to ensure a good review?



## Benefits of setting goals

However big or small, goals provide a clear picture of where you're headed. Knowing where you're headed helps you determine what to do first, second, third, and so forth, to get there. If you want to attend a certain college or university, for instance, you plan small steps along the way to getting there, such as making sure your application is completed before the deadline. Small steps help to keep you on target. They also:

- Keep you focused on what you need to learn
- Give you specific guidelines for gathering the resources you need
- Provide a way to measure how far you've come

In short, goals make your destination clear—and keep you on track until you reach it.



▲ *Goals help you stay on the road to success.*

## Summary

A goal is an objective or want that you plan to fulfill—a specific outcome that you intend to work toward. Goals are either short-term or long-term, and they may be either performance goals or learning goals. Goals are dynamic and vary in degree. Good goals are both SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, time-bound) and effective.



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# TOTAL RECALL

1. What is a goal?
2. What is the difference between a short-term goal and a long-term goal?
3. Describe the two main types of goals.
4. Describe the characteristics of good goals.
5. What are the benefits of setting goals?

# Finding Your Path: The Goal-Setting Process

When you're planning a trip, do you:

- Choose your target destination?
- Map your route?
- Figure out what you need to pack?

Of course you do! You don't just hop in the car and start on your way. You plan ahead.

So, what does it take to plan ahead *effectively*? First, you must pay attention to, and apply, the basics of **goal setting**. Goal setting is the ability to visualize, set, and focus on achieving objectives. It's how you determine what it is you want to do.



## Basics of goal setting

The basics of goal setting include:

1. Choosing your goal
2. Writing your goal down
3. Breaking your goal down
4. Visualizing your goal
5. Reviewing and updating your goal regularly

When you do these things, you set yourself up for success and put yourself in a position to reap all the benefits of accomplishing your goal.

Let's take a look at each of the basics...



▲ *Following the goal-setting steps will help you reach your target.*

## Choose it

This step may take some time to accomplish, and that's all right. It's important to take all the time you need to think it through and decide what you really want to achieve. You may start with just one goal, or you may choose an entire set of goals. Either way, you must make the effort to choose good goals that are appropriate for and meaningful to *you*. Make sure each goal you set is:

- SMART
- Effective
- Positive, not negative—so you'll *want* to achieve it
- Tied to your other goals, not contradictory—so you'll move in *one* direction only



▲ *Make sure your goal helps you move in one direction—toward success!*

## Write it down

It's important to put your goals on paper. If you form an *idea* of what you want to do, but neglect to write it down, you could forget it. But, a written goal is something you can refer back to at any time. You can look it over to keep yourself on target as you work toward achieving it. Writing out your goals also helps you to clarify them in your own mind. Use action verbs in your goal statements. Here are some examples:

My goals:

- ✓ "I will **earn** my real estate broker's license by March 31."
- ✓ "I will **complete** my model for the client by Sunday afternoon."
- ✓ "I will **run** for president of the local business association this year."

Some goal-setting experts recommend that you post your written goal somewhere you will see it every day.



▲ *It's important to put your goals on paper!*



This article by Ashley Feinstein, "Why You Should Be Writing Down Your Goals," explains why written goals are so important: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/85broads/2014/04/08/why-you-should-be-writing-down-your-goals/>.

## Break it down

Next, you need to know how to break down your goal(s). First, you pinpoint your main goal. If you want to be promoted to supervisor in two years, your goal is long-term and rather large-scale.

Split this main goal into several smaller, short-term goals. You do this by answering, “What will it take to achieve the main goal?” Your answer might look something like this:

Main goal: Make supervisor in two years

- Make lead team member in one year
- Become a mentor for new team members
- Attend company’s management workshop series
- Make senior team member in six months
- Come into work a little earlier each morning
- Travel to professional conference over the summer
- Earn excellent scores on quarterly performance reviews
- Qualify for yearly raises each year
- Volunteer for employee advisory board



▲ *Do you want to make supervisor in two years?  
What do you have to do to make it happen?*

When you have identified some smaller, short-term goals to pursue, put them in order. Organize them, prioritize them, and sequence them logically. Ask, “What do I need to do *now* to move toward my main goal?”

**Tip 1:** If there are significant short-term goals that you need to reach before you can reach your main goal, list those goals as most important.

On your list, you know that you need to make senior team member and then lead team member before you can be promoted to supervisor. So, you decide that “Make senior team member in six months” is your most important short-term goal. Under that goal, you list the other goals that will help you reach it:

- Become a mentor for new team members
- Earn excellent scores on quarterly performance reviews
- Qualify for yearly raise



▲ *It's important to break your goals down. If you want to make senior team member, you need to ace your employee evaluations.*





**Tip 2:** If your list includes activities that are not really SMART goals—but which will help you meet your SMART goals—put them under the goals they support.

You decide that to have more time for mentoring new team members, you'll have to start your day a little earlier so you can still get home before dinner. To earn excellent scores on your quarterly performance reviews, you'll need to volunteer for the employee advisory board your manager has asked you to participate in. And, to qualify for your yearly raise, you must show your dedication by doing something such as attending a professional conference over the summer. Your list, then, breaks down further to look like this:

- Make supervisor in two years
  - ⇒ Make senior team member in six months
    - ◆ Become a mentor for new team members
      - ✓ Come into work a little earlier each morning
    - ◆ Earn excellent scores on quarterly performance reviews
      - ✓ Volunteer for employee advisory board
    - ◆ Qualify for yearly raise
      - ✓ Attend professional conference over the summer

Breaking down your goal, then, is about putting your finger on what it is you want to achieve, and listing, in an organized way, how you can achieve it.



▲ "Make senior team member in six months" can seem like a big goal. But, breaking it down into smaller steps makes it more achievable!

## Visualize it

Once you have an organized list, imagine what it would be like to be at your destination. If you visualize it, you picture success in a way that motivates you to work hard and helps you to avoid distraction.

Ask yourself, “How will I feel when I’ve been promoted to supervisor?” With a clear image of where you want to be, you can say “no” to anything that hinders you from reaching your goal.

## Review and update it

As you work toward your goal, if you find that you’ve been a little too optimistic about what you can accomplish in the time frame you’ve set, make adjustments. Remember, goals are dynamic, and you must learn to be flexible. For example, if you have to take significant time off work to have knee surgery, you may need to extend your promotion deadline to three years. Remember that *you* still control your goals even though you may have to adjust them from time to time due to unforeseen circumstances. If you encounter an obstacle, figure out the best way to work around it and adjust your plan accordingly.



▲ *Can you picture it? Imagine what it would be like to achieve your goal!*

## Reasons for change

As you apply the goal-setting basics, remember that you shouldn't change your goals on a whim. If you move the finish line, you might not benefit as much as you'd hoped. Change your goals only when it's appropriate—when achieving them is affected by:

- A new rule
- Another person's involvement
- A change in circumstances
- A change in the resources you have available

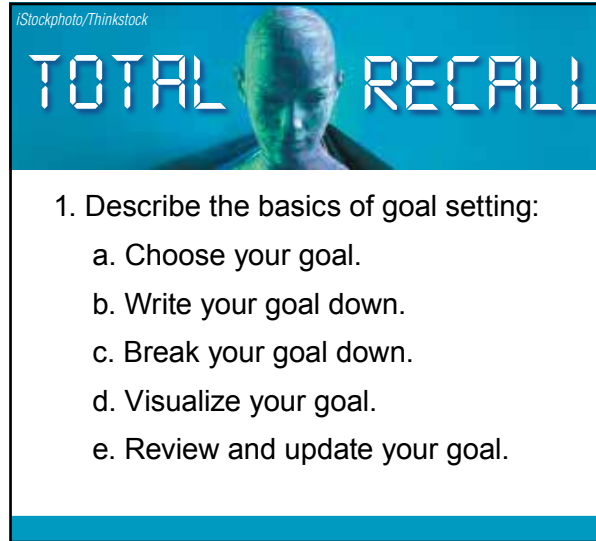
Also, remember to be accountable for your goal-setting actions. Whether you change your goals or not, own up to your failures and learn from your mistakes. And, of course, when you're successful, accept the credit and congratulate yourself!



▲ *It might be necessary to change your goals from time to time.*

## Summary

Goal setting is the ability to visualize, set, and focus on achieving objectives. The basics of goal setting include choosing your goal, writing your goal down, breaking your goal down, visualizing your goal, and reviewing and updating your goal regularly.



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# TOTAL RECALL

1. Describe the basics of goal setting:
  - a. Choose your goal.
  - b. Write your goal down.
  - c. Break your goal down.
  - d. Visualize your goal.
  - e. Review and update your goal.