

SMART Goals

Without proper planning, a goal can be little more than a dream, which may or may not come true.

Making your goals SMART, provides a clear structure and timeline to give you the best opportunity to succeed.

Think about your short and long-term goals. Are your goals SMART? If not, how could you use the criteria below to adapt them?

Specific

Instead of vaguely stating you hope to do better in your exams, make your goal specific. For example, I will do better in my exams by starting my revision earlier (even better, state a date and draft a revision timetable), using practice test papers (how / where will you source these) and organising my notes to make my revision more straightforward.

Measurable

Rather than your goal being 'I hope to increase my grades', you could make it measurable by stating 'I want to increase my grades by an extra 5%'. You can then measure the success of your goal against the achieved grades.

Achievable

There is no point in setting goals you will have little or no opportunity to achieve. Ask yourself if you can achieve your goal or are you setting yourself up to fail? What do you need to give yourself the best opportunity of successfully achieving your goal? Do you need any extra support? If you do, what support is needed and from where?

Realistic

Think about the goals you have set yourself. Goals should challenge and stretch you, but they should still be realistic and aligned to your overall long-term goal. Make sure you know why you have set each goal and what the outcome will look like if completed successfully.

Timely

Give yourself a time limit for when you will have achieved your goal. By not setting a deadline, you run the risk of putting the goal off. If you have not achieved the goal by your set date, use the opportunity to reflect on why you didn't achieve it within this timeframe and what you could now do to complete this goal.

Things to consider...

Is your goal too big?

Make your goals manageable. Break larger goals into a series of smaller goals or tasks.

Are your goals realistic?

Goals should challenge you, but don't set yourself up to fail. Think about how you can adapt your goals to give yourself the best chance to succeed.

Are you focusing on the right goal at the right time?

What other deadlines do you have to complete and are there other obstacles in the way of you completing a specific goal? How could you adapt your plan to deal with this? You may need to revise your goal setting plan several times.

What will success look like?

Thinking about how you will feel once you have completed a goal can keep you motivated. What could you promise yourself as a reward for completing your goal?

What if I don't complete my goal?

Not all goals will be completed, other events or tasks can suddenly take priority or as they say, 'life happens', and original plans are derailed. Take time to think about why you couldn't complete your goal. Was there anything you could have done differently? Did you need any additional support? Do you still need to complete this goal? If you do, plan for anything that needed to be done differently or ask for help.

Prioritising Goals

Time manage your goals.

Think about the dates you set to complete your goals, as each will need a different timeframe. Are they short or long-term goals? You may have several short-term goals that will complete a larger long-term goal, what would be the best order to complete them?

It is important to focus on the right goal at the right time, as they may impact on other outcomes.

Classify your goals

Are your goals important to a long-term goal, or are they a luxury goal? A luxury goal may in a way be a form of procrastination, meaning that whilst it would be nice to complete this goal, it is not essential to the bigger picture. You could easily waste time completing small goals that do not allow you to succeed or move onward with your long-term plans, ask yourself why each goal is important to complete.

Guide created: April 2019 / Review due August 2020