



SMART Goal Setting

**Workshop Notes
NSCAD Peer Mentors, 2020**

SMART Goals

Technique for Setting Goals and Following Through

“The trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never score.”

- Bill Copeland

Goal setting is important because it helps you figure out what you want, and helps you stay on track and stay motivated. Using a goal-setting strategy allows you to break down larger tasks, and may help you identify what you have control over and what you do not. An effectively written goal will help give you the focus, direction, and structure to succeed.

SMART Goals

- ♦ **Specific**
- ♦ **Measurable**
- ♦ **Attainable**
- ♦ **Relevant**
- ♦ **Time-bound**

Specific

- ♦ A big mistake it's easy to make when setting goals is that we tend to make them too vague.
- ♦ If your goal isn't nice and specific, it will be really difficult to know how to go about getting to it.
- ♦ Imagine your target is a red X on the side of a red barn—not very specific. You could maybe hit it by throwing a lot of random darts, but think about how much more efficient you would be if your target was a *yellow* X that you could see more clearly?
- ♦ For example: “I want to be happier” is not specific. Choosing something like “I want to touch base with family/friends more regularly” is a *specific* goal that can help achieve the “being happier” result.
- ♦ The more specific you can get about your goal, the easier it will be to work towards it!
- ♦ Try thinking about the W's (who, what, where, when, why) to get more specific.

Measurable

- ♦ Another common mistake we make is we forget to make our goals measurable. How do you know if you've achieved something if you have no framework to measure your success?
- ♦ This is where it can be helpful to get some numbers in the mix. Ask questions like: When? How many? How often? How much?
- ♦ This is about making your goal *quantifiable*, which makes your goal even more specific—your yellow X on the barn just got a coat of neon paint!
- ♦ By making sure your goal is measurable, you also ensure that you will *know* when you've achieved it, which will boost your confidence and self-esteem, and give you positive energy to pursue more goals.
- ♦ It's a lot easier to measure “did I phone a family member/friend once a week this month?” than it is to measure “did I get happier?”

Attainable

- ♦ Effective goals need to be attainable—something you can realistically achieve with the skills, time, and resources you have available to you *right now*.
- ♦ Aiming too high/too big can be unrealistic and lead to disappointment, shame, and undermine your self-worth and motivation.
- ♦ We all have lofty goals that we want to get to eventually (i.e. I want my jewellery to be in Vogue magazine!) and that's important. But for effective goal setting you want to focus on the smaller goals that move you closer to the big ones, one *attainable* small step at a time (i.e. I want to get my jewellery into a local gallery show.)
- ♦ You want to be aiming for the sweet spot—your goal should be challenging and stretch your abilities a little, but still remain doable.
- ♦ Ask yourself questions like: How will I accomplish this? Do I have the resources I need? Is there a step I may need to do before this one?
- ♦ To go back to the barn analogy, this makes sure that the barn is not too far away—it's within your current dart-throwing ability!

Relevant

- ♦ You want your goals to be things that are relevant to your life and your longer term plans.
- ♦ Making sure your goals are relevant gives you a better chance of feeling *motivated* and enthusiastic about working towards them.
- ♦ Choosing relevant goals helps you maximize the return on the time and effort you put into them. Your time and resources are limited—being thoughtful about what the most relevant goals are to your life right now helps you to use your resources wisely.
- ♦ You may be interested in being able to throw a perfect 3-point basketball shot, but if a more pressing concern in your life *right now* is getting a job or staying on top of your schoolwork, it may be a better use of your time to focus on goals related to those things. Basketball may come into play later on once you've achieved more relevant goals!
- ♦ Ask questions like: Is now the right time? Does this support my other goals? Is this important or necessary for my life right now? Is this a goal that makes sense for me to work towards?

Time-Bound

- ♦ Ahhh, deadlines. They can feel like our greatest enemy sometimes, but really they are your friend and have your best interests at heart. A goal without a timeline is only an *idea!*
- ♦ Some goals will already have a deadline attached to them, such as school assignments, applications for jobs/scholarships/grants, etc. Other goals won't have this built in.
- ♦ A lot of us can forget to add a timeline to our goals. Either because we're not used to giving self-imposed deadlines, or because we're nervous that adding a deadline introduces the possibility of failure.
- ♦ Be realistic, but also challenge yourself. Again, this is a *balance*. You need an appropriate amount of time to achieve your goal, but remember the adage: a task takes however long you're given to do it. If you give yourself three months to accomplish something you could have done in one, that task will generally take the three months.
- ♦ Ask yourself some questions: When does this need to be done? What can I realistically achieve in a day/week/month/semester? How will this fit into my schedule?
- ♦ If you have a time limit for when you need to throw your dart at the barn, you're more likely to get it thrown!

Example

- ♦ Let's say my goal was that I wanted to work on getting over my shyness. "Be more comfortable talking" is not a good goal. It's vague, not measurable, has no deadline, I don't really know where to start. Instead, let's make it a **SMART** goal!
- ♦ **Specific:** I want to become more comfortable participating in class discussions.
- ♦ **Measurable:** I want to do 1 spoken comment and 1 chat-box comment in each of my courses.
- ♦ **Attainable:** I have spoken up in one or two times in class, and used the chat-box once, so it's not too big a stretch to try and do one comment in each course.
- ♦ **Relevant:** This is relevant because right now I am really focused on overcoming my shyness, and this will help with that as well as compliment my other goal of wanting to get the most out of my school experience.
- ♦ **Time-bound:** I want to achieve this goal by the end of the semester.
- ♦ **SMART Goal:** "I will become more comfortable participating in class discussions by making 1 spoken comment and 1 chat-box comment in each of my courses by the end of this semester."