

Goal Setting

GETTING WHAT YOU WANT How to Make Goals

"If you don't know what you want, you will probably never get it."

This quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes points to the absolute necessity of identifying and defining your **goals** if you are to be successful in college. A goal is defined in Webster's dictionary as an "objective", "the purpose towards which an endeavor is directed." Common goals of college students are getting a job to pay tuition; maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or better; joining a campus organization; getting a degree in five years.

Unbelievable as it may seem, many students come to college with no clear idea of their goals. They may not even have overall goals like the ones just described. To be successful while in college, as well as life, you must set clear goals. For example, if you know you need a job to pay spring semester's tuition, you will need to set goals relating to what kinds of jobs you are willing to work in; what employers you will apply to; what wage you need to earn to pay your expenses, etc. Then, you will need to pursue these goals, which involves scheduling your time so that you can apply, interview, and ensure you are hired in time to make enough money before the tuition payment deadline.

There are three types of goals, all of which are important to develop:

- **Short-range or immediate:** complete one-half of general education requirements by the end of freshman year
- **Mid-range goal:** graduate from college within four years
- **Long-range goal:** employment with Big 8 accounting firm

Establishing goals can be difficult. The following guidelines will help you accomplish this important process:

1. Goals are **value based**. Goals must be related to your values. You will find it very difficult to pursue a goal that is not directly linked to something that is important and meaningful for you. For example, if your goal is to pursue a career in social work, but you do not value interpersonal relationships, it will be difficult to succeed in accomplishing your goal.
2. Goals are **specific and concrete**. Your goal must state exactly what you are going to do. It can't be some vague, hopeful wish. A goal to stop procrastinating sounds nice, but it is not specific. A specific goal would state, "I will write a study plan by the end of the first week of class."
3. Goals are **measurable**. You need to be able to evaluate your progress towards completion of your goal. Include how you will know when you have/have not achieved your goal: what will you be doing when your goal is achieved. ("I must select my paper topic by October 18 to finish my paper by November 9. When my paper is typed and bound by November 8, I will have completed my goal)."
4. Goals are **realistic**. Your goal must be attainable, taking into consideration your personal resources and abilities. (If you have never taken an algebra class in high school, it is not realistic to register for Math 1050 before taking Math 0900 or Math 1010).
5. Goals are **time-framed**. Always set a beginning and end date for your goal.
6. Goals are **written**. Committing a goal to writing makes it more concrete. It encourages you to be committed to completing it. A goal written on a piece of paper tacked to your bulletin board or written in your daily planner is difficult to ignore or pretend it was never made.



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7. Goals are **shared**. Telling someone else of your goal establishes accountability. You may be less likely to procrastinate or waver in your commitment to attaining

the goal.

- Goals need to be **flexible**. There are many factors that can affect attaining your goal. Rarely do you follow it through to completion without any problems. Often, you will experience temporary setbacks that will interrupt your progress. These interruptions do not have to keep you from reaching your goal. Instead, re-examine your plan, revise or make a new one. You may discover you are unable to reach your goal in the original time frame; you may even decide to change your goal (you may have re-assessed what is important to you). This is okay, as long as the revisions are a way to ensure your success versus avoiding doing something you really want to do.

GOAL SETTING PROCESS

- My goal is: _____

- I want to achieve this goal because it is important and meaningful to me in these ways: _____

- If a stranger were to read my goal statement, he/she would know exactly what I am trying to achieve (reword if the answer is "no"): _____

- I will know when I have achieved my goal because I will have _____

- My goal will require me to have the following skills, abilities, and/or resources: _____

- I know my goal is realistic because I have the skills, abilities, and/or resources listed in #5 above (reassess your goal if you don't have items listed in #5) _____

- I will begin my goal: _____(month)____(day)_____ year)
- I will complete my goal: _____(month)____(day)_____ year)
- I will copy this goal plan and put _____(display where you will see it every day).
- I will share my goal with _____ (name).