

Writing SMART Goals

How do I write good goals?

The best format for writing effective goals uses the acronym S.M.A.R.T. for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based. Brief descriptions of each of these elements are provided below. See the [SMART Goal Worksheet](#) to help you develop these.

Specific – Goals need to be clear, action oriented, and easy to understand rather than vague. Goals should state specifically what it is that is going to be changed or accomplished, preferably in terms of a measure, and by when.

Measurable – Goals should be measurable. You need to set an objective target so it is easy to track your progress and agree on whether the goal has been met. Having the goals measurable assures the value of the goal and makes managing performance much easier and fairer.

Attainable – Goals need to be challenging, but yet realistic. Don't set goals so high that it is impossible to achieve. Decades of research on performance have shown that for individual goals to be effective, they have to be demanding, but not so hard as to appear unattainable. Performance and satisfaction are higher when the average probability of success is around the 70 - 80% level.

Relevant – A goal must be relevant to the strategy and direction of the organization. The goals you set need to be consistent with other goals you have established and fit with yours as well as your organization's short and long-term vision.

Time-based – Goals should have a clear start time and a planned "due date" for goal completion. Larger projects should have milestones or sub-tasks that have both clear due dates but also decision points regarding project funding, progress, and so forth.