

Turning Goals Into Action: The SMART Approach

Objective

To set a SMART goal, reflect on your progress, and adjust as needed.

What to Know

Setting goals is a powerful tool for creating meaningful change in your life, whether you want to advance your career, get fit, strengthen relationships, or boost your overall well-being. However, vague or overly ambitious goals can leave you feeling frustrated, discouraged, or stuck. The SMART goals framework is an evidence-based method that helps you set clear, actionable, and realistic goals. This approach allows you to define what you want to achieve and develop a plan for reaching those goals with greater confidence and focus.

SMART stands for:

- **Specific**—Clearly define what you want to achieve. Instead of saying, "I want to be healthier," say, "I want to walk for 30 minutes five times a week."
- **Measurable**—Ensure your goal can be tracked so you can see your progress. A measurable goal gives you clear markers of success.
- **Achievable**—Set realistic goals that challenge you but are within reach given your resources and constraints.
- **Relevant**—Ensure the goal aligns with what truly matters to you.
- **Time-bound**—Set a timeline for your goal. A deadline creates urgency and helps you stay committed.

What to Do

In the space below, write down a general goal you want to achieve. Don't worry about making it "SMART" yet—just focus on what you want to change, improve, or accomplish.

Example Goal: I want to feel more organized.

Your Goal: _____

Now, refine your goal to make it SMART. Break down each part of the SMART framework and fill in the details for your goal.

1. Specific. What exactly do you want to accomplish? Be as clear and detailed as possible.

Example: *I want to organize my workspace by cleaning out my desk and neatly arranging my office supplies.*

Your Specific Goal: _____

2. Measurable. How will you know when you have accomplished this goal? What markers can you use to measure progress?

Example: *I will consider my workspace organized when my desk is clear of unnecessary items, and all my supplies are in designated places.*

Make Your Goal Measurable: _____

3. Achievable. Is this goal realistic for you? Do you have the resources (time, energy, support) needed to reach it?

Example: *I will spend 15 minutes daily tidying up my desk and organizing my supplies until my workspace is fully organized.*

Make Your Goal Achievable: _____

4. Relevant. Why is this goal important to you? How does it align with your overall values or long-term aspirations?

Example: *An organized workspace will help me feel less stressed and more focused, which is important for my productivity and mental clarity.*

Make Your Goal Relevant: _____

5. Time-bound. When do you plan to start, and when do you hope to achieve this goal?

Example: *I will start organizing my workspace on Monday and complete it within two weeks.*

Your Time-bound Goal: _____

Using the information above, write your fully developed SMART goal.

Example: *I want to organize my workspace by cleaning out my desk and arranging my office supplies neatly. I'll spend 15 minutes each day on this task and aim to complete it within two weeks, which will help me feel more focused and less stressed.*

Your SMART Goal: _____

Reflect on potential challenges you might face in reaching this goal. List possible obstacles and brainstorm solutions to overcome them.

How does working toward this goal make you feel? _____

What changes have you noticed in your daily life since starting this goal? _____

What steps or habits have helped you stay committed to this goal? _____

Reflections on This Exercise

Did anything surprise you about this activity? If so, describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Reference

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist*, 57(9), 705–717.