

SMART Goals

Set clear and achievable goals



How does this help me?

- Ensures clarity: Activities must be defined clearly and concretely.
- Tasks become easier: A large task is broken down into smaller bundles, making the overall goal more tangible and easier to achieve.
- Gives a sense of accomplishment: Sub-tasks are easier to complete and small successes are visible soon.
- Increases motivation: Moments of success motivate you to keep going.

How does it work?

Use the SMART formula to write meaningful and encouraging goals. A goal should meet the following criteria:

S

SPECIFIC

Formulate your goal as concretely as possible and think about everything that is necessary to achieve this goal.

M

MEASURABLE

How can you measure whether you have reached your goal? The goal must be quantifiable.

A

ACHIEVABLE

Can you reach the goal on your own? Can you actively influence the outcome?

R

RELEVANT

A SMART goal is one that you WANT to achieve and that you believe in. What motivates you to achieve this goal and why is it important to you?

T

TIME-BOUND

When should the goal be accomplished? Decide on a time frame or a fixed date by which you want to reach your destination.

TIPS

- Keep your goals positive and write them down in a suitable place, e.g., your semester planner.
- Focus on smaller goals instead of the overarching task. This helps you avoid pressure.
- Reward yourself for goals you achieve!



Example:

Original wording:

"I don't want to always wait until the last minute to do things!"

What is wrong with this goal? Not wanting to put everything off until the last minute is a goal that most of us can relate to. But what does this actually mean? When exactly is this "last minute" and what does it mean to complete tasks "earlier" or "on time"? The goal as it is worded here is not specific enough, nor is it measurable. It is realistic, of course, but what individual steps do I need to take to complete tasks without procrastinating? What do I have to do to feel less stressed? Which concrete tasks do I mean when I say "things"? How do I plan and divide my time, how do I structure my work phases? And, last but not least, what time frame are we talking about? A clearly defined time when I want to hand in a paper, for example, is more realistic to achieve than simply resolving to be less distracted.

Written as a SMART goal:

"This semester, I would like to have my term papers in seminar X and Y ready to hand in a week before the deadline, so that I can be more relaxed and have enough time to revise them if necessary."

What makes this goal better? The goal here is still to not hold tasks and projects off until the last minute. What is new is that the time at which the tasks should be completed is defined (one week before the actual deadline), the result is specified (term papers are ready for submission), and it is clarified which tasks are meant (term papers for seminar X and Y). In addition, the reason why I want to achieve this goal is stated, namely to reduce the stress and time pressure that is created by procrastinating.

By focusing on concrete tasks and a specific point in time, I create clarity about what exactly I want to achieve. This makes it easier to work towards the targeted date. It also helps me to get started and increases my motivation to actually complete my tasks on time.



More examples of SMART goals:

"For my term paper, I'm going to write a first draft of my intro by Friday. The draft should be roughly one page long."

"On Sunday, I will take two hours to work on math problems from my tutorial XY."

"By 12 p.m., I will have read the first 10 pages of the text and will jot down the key ideas."

Literature:

Bastian, Jasmin, Groß, Lena (2012): *Lerntechniken und Wissensmanagement*. Huter und Roth KG: Wien, S. 72 ff.

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