

What are SMART goals?

SMART is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based. Each element of the SMART framework works together to create a goal that is carefully planned, clear and trackable.

You may have set goals in the past that were difficult to achieve because they were too vague, aggressive or poorly framed. Working toward a poorly crafted goal can feel daunting and unachievable. Creating SMART goals can help solve these problems. Whether you're setting personal or professional goals, using the SMART goal framework can establish a strong foundation for achieving success.

Below, we'll demonstrate how to turn a goal like "I want to be in leadership" into a SMART goal.

S = Specific

Be as clear and specific as possible with what you want to achieve. The narrower your goal, the more you'll understand the steps necessary to achieve it.

Example: "I want to earn a position managing a development team for a startup tech company."

M = Measurable

What evidence will prove you're making progress toward your goal? For example, if your goal is to earn a position managing a development team for a startup tech company, you might measure progress by the number of management positions you've applied for or interviews you've completed. Setting milestones along the way will give you an opportunity to re-evaluate and course-correct as needed. When you achieve your milestones, remember to reward yourself in small but meaningful ways.

Example: "I will apply to three open positions for the manager of a development team at a tech startup."

A = Achievable

Have you set an achievable goal? Setting goals you can reasonably accomplish within a certain timeframe will help keep you motivated and focused. Using the above example of earning a job managing a development team, you should know the credentials, experience and skills necessary to earn that position. Before you begin working toward a goal, decide whether it's something you can achieve now or whether there are additional preliminary steps you should take to become better prepared.

Example: "I will update my resume with relevant qualifications, so I can apply to three open positions for the manager of a development team at a tech startup."

R = Relevant

When setting goals for yourself, consider whether they are relevant. Each of your goals should align with your values and larger, long-term goals. If a goal doesn't contribute toward your broader

objectives, you might rethink it. Ask yourself why the goal is important to you, how achieving it will help you and how it will contribute toward your long-term goals.

Example: “To achieve my goal of being in leadership, I will update my resume with relevant qualifications so I can apply to three open positions for the manager of a development team at a tech startup.”

T = Time-based

What is your goal time frame? An end-date can help provide motivation and help you prioritize. For example, if your goal is to earn a promotion to a more senior position, you might give yourself six months. If you haven’t achieved your goal by then, take time to consider why. Your timeframe might have been unrealistic, you might have run into unexpected roadblocks, or your goal might have been unachievable.

Example: “To achieve my goal of being in leadership, I will update my resume with relevant qualifications so I can apply to three open positions for the manager of a development team at a tech startup this week.”

Using the SMART goal framework sets boundaries and defines the steps you’ll need to take, resources necessary to get there, and milestones that indicate progress along the way. With SMART goals, you’re more likely to achieve your goal efficiently and effectively.