



Best Practices to Set Goals

The ability to write effective, strategic goal statements and take action towards achieving them is a key personal and professional skill that will give you the tools you need to move forward with confidence and clarity.

Professionally, effective goal statements:

Clarify what you should and should not be working on

Connect the work you are doing to organizational goals, mission, and vision

Provide focus when managing competing priorities

Demonstrate initiative and a willingness to own one's path

Personally, effective goal statements:

Help turn vague big-picture dreams into actionable reality

Provide motivation when feeling overwhelmed or stuck

Create accountability checks through concrete deadlines

Clarify direction and a path forward

Here are some tips for writing great goal statements:

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Avoid double-barreled statements such as “identify next steps and create a plan to move forward.” Those are two different goals and should be written as such.

KEEP IT TIME-CONDENSED!

Write no more than six months to one-year goals. Give yourself room to change, pivot, and celebrate wins along the way by writing short-term goals.

KEEP IT SMART!

Use the SMART goal model. Goals should be:

- **Specific**, actionable statements about what you will do, learn, or achieve. Always start with an action verb.
- **Measurable** statements that clearly demonstrate how you will know when you have accomplished the goal.
- **Achievable** statements that are neither too big nor too limited in scope.
- **Realistic** statements that don't set you up for failure from the outset. Do you have, or can you acquire, what you need in terms of resources, time, opportunity, or other needs, to accomplish the goal?
- **Timebound** statements with a clear deadline of when you will achieve the goal.

Once you have written your goals, **share them with someone for feedback** and to gain an accountability partner. You are always more likely to work towards your goals when you share them.

So, What's Next?

Look forward six months to one year: **Where do you want to be that is different than where you are right now?**

Write no more than **three goal statements** that will help you to get closer to that ideal future state.

For each goal statement, write **3-5 action steps**, using the SMART goal model, to help you to achieve that goal.

Share your goals and action statements with an **accountability partner**.