

SMART Goals

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"We are our own worst enemies." I don't know who said it first, but I know the statement was directed at me. My biggest self-defeating behavior is setting unachievable goals. Now I don't consciously set out to fail. My goals are wonderful and exciting, but they grow so big I freeze. It's an evolving process that always ends the same way—another goal not met.

It wasn't until I participated in a negotiations workshop that I discovered I didn't really know how to set appropriate goals. But what is a goal? I used to think all I needed to do was determine what I want and establish that as the goal. I want to be published, some people want a house on the lake or a boat, but these are our dreams—the end target. ***A goal is a task that moves us forward to achieve our dreams.***

After setting me straight, my instructor introduced me to the SMART framework for goal setting that puts the kibosh on my destructive behavior.

My Dream: To be a published romance author.

S Specific

Break the dream down into smaller tasks. There are all sorts of things that need to be done—just pick something. Make it very specific. For instance, writing a certain number of

pages per day will eventually complete a book, which is something I can present to a publisher.

M Measurable

Identify how to know if I am achieving my goal. Writing a certain number of pages is easy to measure—either I write them or I don't. It is as simple as that.

A Achievable

Ah, the next piece of my self-defeating behavior—setting unrealistic goals like writing 400 perfect pages in a month and landing a publishing contract by the following Tuesday. I do not have the luxury of writing all day long; therefore, completing 400 perfect pages in 30 days is impossible—for me and most people I know. So we won't even go into the part about landing a publishing contract in five weeks. I believe three pages a day, five days a week is the perfect solution. (WARNING! It is important to remember that everyone is different, and we cannot compare ourselves to others.)

R Relevant

The goal has to be associated with the dream. Writing so many pages per day has a direct impact on whether the book gets finished. If I set a goal to do one load of laundry each day, I'll have clean clothes. But just how many words does that put on paper? Make sure your goal is directly related to your dream.

T Time bound

Deadlines. This goes back the scenario in the achievable section above. There are 24 hours in a day, and I have a certain amount of flexibility when it comes to managing my daily schedule. When my pages for the day are done, I have achieved my daily goal and can move on to other things.

Now that you have seen the framework in action, it is your turn to be *smart* and use the SMART framework to set your own goals.