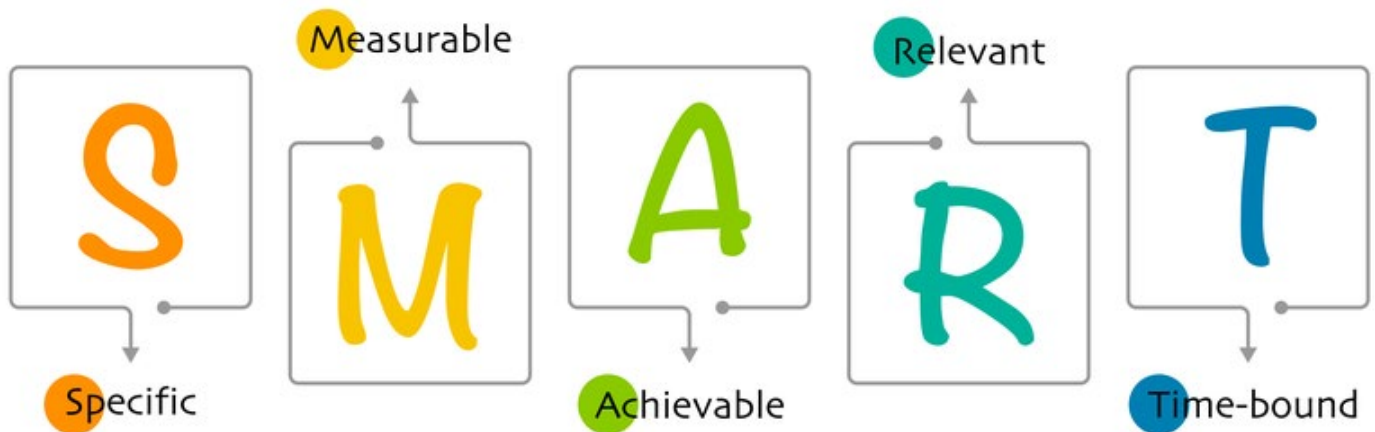


Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals: 7 Steps to Achieving Any Goal

By Wonderlust Worker



Goal Setting the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Way

Goal setting is an essential part of life. We all need goals in order to help illuminate the road to our hopes and our dreams. They help to invoke a more visceral, tangible, and actionable path to what we desire in life. When we write out goals, they become more real. They help us to visually embrace what we want out of life, enabling us to provide some measurable metrics to the progress that we make along the way.

Goals are so very important to life, which is why we all need to set them the right way. And, what's apparently clear is that we all have goals in life, but we don't all set those goals the right way. We tend to leave those goals as obscure targets in our mind, never actually putting pen to paper to write them out and see them in front of our eyes.

Why Are Goals So Important?

Many people go about their lives lost, like a puppy without a home. They go from day to day, week to week, month to month, and even year to year without a real concrete direction for their lives. They fail to steer their lives in the right direction, because without goals that are set the right way, they're not even clear on what that direction is.

Goals are an important aspect to life. Not just goals in and of themselves, but what those goals mean to us. We don't just want things for the sake of wanting them – when that's the case, we're unable to achieve what we set out to achieve. We can't just say that we want something because we think it's "cool" or will make us look good in front of others. If the things that we want don't have a more profound meaning beyond the superficial, when the going gets tough, we will oftentimes get going.

So, goals are important. They help to pour a concrete solid foundation to our hopes and dreams, and the things we want. They help steer the ship of our lives through stormy and choppy waters, across the channels of struggle, and onto the shores of accomplishment. We need goals in our lives, just as much as a captain needs a compass to navigate the high seas.

New Year's Syndrome

Setting goals is important, we all need to set goals in our lives and set them the right way. When we don't set goals the right way, we suffer through uncertainty, frustration, and a generally unfulfilled state-of-mind. However, what's even worse is that, not only do we set goals the wrong way, but we also tend to only set them once a year. And this, of course, happens on New Year's Eve.

We get stricken with something called New Year's Eve Syndrome, which see us setting those goals once per year, and essentially forgetting about them. In fact, according to a [University of Scranton](#) study in 2014, only 8% of people who set out to achieve their New Year's Eve goals, actually achieve them. Only 64% stick it out past one month, 46% past 6 months, and 8% through the end to long-term achievement.

If you're tired of not setting goals the right way or only setting them once a year, then there's something missing from the recipe. If all the ingredients aren't there and the proper steps aren't taken, how can we profess to actually saying we want something, yet continually not doing what it takes to achieve it?

So, what's the solution?

S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goal Setting

This is a mnemonic acronym that can be applied to goals in a way that makes them easier to tackle. This originally dates back to a November 1981 publication in an issue of *Management Review*, penned by George T. Doran, which addressed S.M.A.R.T. goal setting when referring to businesses management's objectives. S.M.A.R.T. goals are goals that are specific, meaningful, achievable, relevant, and time bound. As you can see, the acronym, S.M.A.R.T. is a play on words.

But, S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal setting takes this two steps further, forcing you to evaluate and readjust your approach. This added sense of measurement and readjustment is critical to the achievement of anything in life. All too often, we tend to set our goals, but not put any type of measurement to them. When we don't measure and track something, it becomes far easier for the mind to trick us into either putting things off or thinking that we've come further along than we really have.

The 7 Steps to Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals

As you look at the acronym for S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals, it's clear to see that there are seven steps since there are 7 letters in the word.

Step #1: "S" – Specific

The first step in setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is to be specific – VERY specific. The more specific you are about your goals, the better and more able you'll be to accomplish them no matter what method you use. This means that you don't just say you want to make money or lose more weight, you have to say exactly how much money you want to make or how much weight you want to lose. You have to put a real and exact figure on it. Make it measurable.

Why is this so important? Well, in goal setting, in order to make it visceral to the mind and clear, you have to be able to quantify that goal. Without specifics, there's no real target, just some obscure direction. When the goal is obscure, it allows the psychology of your mind to override your goals. You succumb to things like emotion-numbing activities, to easily avoid doing something that wasn't that concrete in the first place.

Specifics are the fuel in the engine of your goals. You have to provide specifics if you're going to achieve anything at all. When you write out your goals, be absolutely as specific as possible. And never be afraid to be too specific.

Step #2: "M" – Meaningful

The second step in setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is to set goals that are meaningful enough to you that you'll get out there and do whatever it takes to achieve them. This is the "why" in goal setting. When your goals have a deep enough meaning to you, you'll do whatever it takes to achieve them. This doesn't have to do with vanity or superficial reasons, but more profound and life-altering reasons why you want to achieve something.

People don't want more money because they want more paper with deceased notables on them. No, they want more money because of what that money will bring them: time, freedom, family, security, contribution, and so on. You must attribute a strong enough meaning to your goals, beyond being specific about them. So, next to your specific goal, write out what that goal means to you and make sure that it's something important.

Step #3: "A" – Achievable

The third step in setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is to set goals that are achievable. Now, there's certainly a school of thought out there that says that you can accomplish whatever you want, whenever you want it. But, when you're setting goals, especially when they're short-

term goals (i.e. within 1 year), make sure that they're achievable. This doesn't mean that you can't shoot for the stars in your long-term plans, such as 5 years down the road or even 10 years down the road. It just means that you have to pick goals that you can achieve in the short term.

For example, if you've never made more than \$100,000 in a year, don't say that you're going to be a billionaire in the span of one year. Set goals that you can actually achieve so that you build on your momentum. Your short-term goals should be something within your reach, but not so easily attainable that they won't take much work or effort on your part. This will help you to build that all-important momentum. Once you achieve your year-long goals, you can broaden those into much greater hopes and dreams down the road.

Step #4: "R" – Relevant

The fourth step in setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is to set goals that are relevant to your life. This means that the goals should be inline with and in harmony with what you actually want out of life; they should match up with your core values. If your core values are contradicting with your goals, then you'll find yourself merely getting frustrated and giving up.

When you set goals that are relevant, you must dig deep down inside and truly understand what you want out of life. If one of your core values is freedom, then setting goals that have you bound to a desk most of the year won't help you to live a fulfilled life. Remember, your goals shouldn't be designed with the notion of succeeding to be happy, but rather, with happily succeeding. Set goals that are relevant and inline with what you truly want out of life.

Step #5: "T" – Time-Bound

The fifth step in setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is to ensure that they're time-bound goals. You have to set an exact date on when you plan to achieve these goals. Focus on goals that are in 3-month intervals. If you plan to achieve a 50-pound weight loss in one year, then you break that down into 3-month intervals. That's 12.5 pounds every three months.

When your goals are time-bound, they're measurable, and you should hold yourself accountable by measuring those goals on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. How close are you to achieving your goals? How much further did you get from achieving your goals? Without making your goals time-bound and measurable, you won't be able to see your progress.

Step #6: "E" – Evaluate

The sixth step in setting goals using the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Method is to ensure that your goals are evaluated. By evaluating your goals every single day, you'll be much more likely to achieve

them. Why is that? Well, long-term goals (and also goals that are 3 months or 6 months out), can easily be ignored if they aren't evaluated every single day.

Make sure that you setup a system for evaluating your goals and you make the evaluation of your goals habitual. Don't ignore this all-important step. Your mind has a very clever way of allowing you to ignore your goals by pushing you into emotion-numbing behaviors when those goals aren't closely evaluated.

Step #7: "R" – Readjust

The final step in setting goals with the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. method is to re-adjust your approach. If, for example, you find yourself pursuing a goal but continuously hitting a brick wall, readjust your method and techniques. For example, when a plane has a goal of flying from LAX to MIA, it must constantly evaluate its progress and readjust its approach to ensure that it reaches its target by an appointed time. The plane constantly evaluates and readjusts until it arrives in MIA. You should be doing the same for your goals.

Readjust doesn't mean that you must throw your goals out and start all over. What it means is that you must try different approaches until you find yourself getting closer and closer to your goals. That's why constant evaluation on a daily basis is so important. If you don't evaluate you can't measure your progress.

SMART Goal Worksheet

Today's Date: _____ Target Date: _____ Start Date: _____

Date Achieved: _____

Goal: _____

Verify that your goal is SMART

Specific: *What exactly will you accomplish?*

Measurable: *How will you know when you have reached this goal?*

Achievable: *Is achieving this goal realistic with effort and commitment? Have you got the resources to achieve this goal? If not, how will you get them?*

Relevant: *Why is this goal significant to your life?*

Timely: *When will you achieve this goal?*

This goal is important because:

The benefits of achieving this goal will be:

Take Action!

Potential Obstacles

Potential Solutions

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Who are the people you will ask to help you?

Specific Action Steps: *What steps need to be taken to get you to your goal?*

What?

Expected Completion Date

Completed

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