



GOAL *definition* GUIDE

How to express a dream or vision as a SMART goal and outline a realistic and achievable action plan.

A goal is an idea of a future desired result which a person or a group of people envision. It is the specific achievement toward which effort is directed. Dreams, on the other hand, are more general, intangible. They are like a mission or wishful thinking, something we desire and aim at in life in general or at some point in life. The goal is what you get when you translate your dream into a more specific, tangible statement, and you are more clear about how to achieve it, including what and when actions need to be put into place.

A mission or a dream could be “helping others”. However, when you start working at fulfilling your dream, you will have to outline how you will help others. You can start doing that by asking the question: “What exactly does helping others mean to me?”. The goal would be something along the lines of: “I want to help people in my community who need to find a job by showing them how to write a CV’ and/or “I want to help local charities by donating clothes and food”, and/or “I want to help my older neighbours with their grocery shopping”. You’ve defined something specific, and you will be able to carry it out without getting ‘drifted’ along the way or distracted by other priorities or events.

dreams
goals

SMART GOAL

To translate dreams or big ambitious goals into more specific ones requires a clever approach to narrow it down, especially if your dreams or goals concern other people besides you or your time and resources constraints.

The SMART goal definition is a very effective tool that has been proven to work for any industry or type of goal. The letters stand for:

Specific,
measurable,
achievable,
relevant and
time-bound

When you define your goal using these characteristics, you will face a crystal clear objective, the actions you need to do to achieve it, and the timeframe to accomplish it.

SPECIFIC

The specific characteristic calls for narrowing the scope of your goal. It should be clear and specific. If you have a goal that is very ambitious or very general and vague, it would be complicated to achieve it during a set period of time. On the other hand, if your goal is too insignificant, does not imply big change or is more of a business as usual (or life as usual), you don't need this analysis - go ahead and do the few actions needed. When narrowing down your goal, try to answer the five "W" questions:

- What do I want to accomplish?
- Why is this goal important?
- Who is involved?
- Where is it located?
- Which resources or limits are involved?

MEASURABLE

Your goals must be measurable so that you can track your progress and stay motivated. If you don't measure, you don't know if you are really advancing. Measuring progress also helps you to stay focused, meet your deadlines and feel the excitement of getting closer to achieving your goal. A measurable goal should address the 'How' questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

On occasion, some goals might seem difficult to measure. But there is always a way to record progress objectively. You can always refer to the number of events during a period of time or the amount of time spent working on the goal.

ATTAINABLE

Your goal also needs to be realistic and achievable to be successful. In other words, it should stretch your effort but remain possible. When you set an achievable goal, you may identify previously overlooked opportunities or resources that can bring you closer to it. An achievable goal will usually answer questions such as:

- How can I accomplish this goal?
- What actions will I do?
- How realistic are the goal and the actions based on other constraints, such as financial factors?

Tip: Beware of setting goals that someone else has power over, not you. For example, "Get that promotion!" depends on who else applies and on the recruiter's decision. But "Get the experience and training that I need to be considered for that promotion" is entirely down to you.

RELEVANT

This step is about ensuring that your goal matters to you and aligns with other relevant goals. You will need support and assistance in achieving your goals, and it is important to retain control over them. So make sure that your plans align and that you are not counterproductive by undertaking too many different initiatives.

You are responsible for achieving your own goal, and that means that you have to consider if it is imperative right here, right now. A relevant goal can answer "yes" to these questions:

- Does this seem worthwhile?
- Is this the right time?
- Does this match our other efforts/needs?
- Am I the right person to reach this goal?
- Is it applicable in the current socio-economic environment?

TIME-BOUND

Every goal needs a target date to have a deadline to focus on and something to work toward. This part of the SMART goal criteria helps prevent everyday tasks completely from prioritising your longer-term goals. A time-bound goal will usually answer these questions:

- When?
- What can I do six months from now?
- What can I do six weeks from now?
- What can I do today?

EXAMPLE:

After completing the SMART goal definition exercise, you will have a sound goal to focus your efforts on, and you will be clear on how to work to achieve it. Here is how the example described above translates into a specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound goal:

“ I want to gain the skills and experience necessary to become head of design within my organization to build my career and lead a team within 3 years. ”