

the Writing Centers at Saint Mary's

Winona and Minneapolis

SMART Goals

This handout will explain what SMART Goals are and how to set them for academic purposes. SMART Goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-limited.

Here is a sample of an academic goal that is not SMART: **I want to do well in all of my classes.**

This goal leaves a lot of questions: How will the student know if they do well? What does “well” mean? Is it even possible to do “well” in all of their classes? What is the deadline? Why is this important?

Here is how you might revise this to create a SMART Goal: I will achieve a grade of 90% or better in my major courses this term in preparation for my graduate school applications. This goal is: specific because it clearly identifies what the student wants to do; measurable because it states a quantifiable goal of 90%; attainable because the student limits it to “major courses”; relevant because it applies to his/her graduate school applications; and time-limited because there is a clear deadline. Here are some questions you should ask yourself as you work on creating SMART Goals:

Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time-limited
What do I want to do?	How will I know when I reach my goal?	Is this goal reasonable? Why or why not?	Why is this goal important to me?	What is my specific deadline for reaching this goal?
How can I focus this goal?	Is there a number or some other unit of measure that I am trying to achieve?	Can I split this goal into smaller steps?	How will reaching this goal help me in the future?	
What strong verb can I use?	Who will be evaluating me?	Will this goal challenge me? Why or why not?		

Here are some tips to think about when creating your SMART Goals:

- Make sure your goals are things you can do and don't rely on outside sources. For example, “I want to perform 20 pediatric intubations” isn't a SMART Goal because you don't totally control the outcome of how many of these patients you might see. A SMART Goal would be “I will achieve an 80% intubation success rate on the first attempt during this clinical rotation.”
- Avoid weak language like “I want to complete four hours in the cath lab by the end of this rotation.” Instead, show your commitment with strong action verbs like “I will complete at least four hours in the cath lab by the end of this rotation.”
- Be sure that your SMART Goals are both attainable and challenging. This means that you shouldn't make a goal a normal expectation like passing a course or test but something that will help you improve in a particular area.