

What Is a SMART Goal?

SMART Goals are:

- Specific** The goal should be concrete and action-oriented. What, specifically, are you trying to achieve? When writing a goal, ask yourself: what do I mean by this? Is there another way to write this goal to make it more understandable or obvious for what I mean? Does the goal start with an action verb (for example: improve, create, develop)?
- Measurable** How will you know when you have accomplished the goal? How will you track and measure progress? How do you define success? Be sure to include this with your goal.
- Achievable** The goal should require work, but be attainable. Is the goal too big? For example, “become CEO of my company” is probably too big of a goal for a one-year mentorship program. Or perhaps the goal is too easily achieved? Do not set your sights too low! Make sure that the time-frame you set is realistic. Do you have the ability and commitment to reach the goal? What additional resources, time, money, or capability, will be needed for you to reach the goal? Does the goal set you up for failure?
- Relevant** Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Is this goal in line with your long-term objectives?
- Timely** Set a time limit; there should be a specific time-frame for accomplishing the goal which will keep you accountable.

Let's look at an example: *Be more involved this year with the Northwestern Law Alumni Association.*

- **Is it specific?** Not really. What is meant by “more involved”? And, “be” is not an action verb. Get more specific – what exactly is it that you are trying to achieve?
- **Is it measurable?** No, not as it is written. How will you know when you have **achieved that goal?** How will you measure your success?
- **Is it achievable?** Potentially, but without specifics, it is hard to determine.
- **Is it relevant?** Potentially, but again, without more specifics it is difficult to determine.
- **Is it timely?** Yes. It is focused on this year.
- **A better goal would be:** Develop a personal and professional support network by attending six Northwestern Law Alumni Association events this year.

Adapted From: Meyer, Paul J (2003). What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals. Attitude Is Everything: If You Want to Succeed Above and Beyond. Meyer Resource Group, Incorporated, The. ISBN 978-0-89811-304-4.