

Goal setting

Being able to set goals is an important part of everyday life. You think about many things each day that you could set goals for and the choices you make guide you towards or away from your goals. Let's think about goal setting based upon the S.M.A.R.T. approach, is a simple technique that provides structure for you.

Example Goal: Area of physical fitness to focus on for goal:
Cardiovascular Endurance

GOAL: I want to improve my cardiovascular endurance by decreasing my mile-run time by 30 seconds in 5 months (during the May fitness testing session in P.E.) by focusing on my cardiovascular and muscular endurance during PE workouts. I will be able to measure my progress by completing a trial run at the end of each month after school to help me see if I need to adjust or maintain my workouts.

The S.M.A.R.T. principle for goal setting: **Set Action-Oriented Goals: Another important aspect of goal-setting is to keep them focused on personal action. Don't forget to consider not only what you want to achieve, but how you plan to achieve it.

1. **Set Specific Goals.** Saying you want to "get faster" or "get stronger" is far too general to really motivate you in your training. In the example above, the goal gives a specific amount of time that will show that the person has improved their running speed and is specific about how it will be done.

2. **Set Measurable Goals.** You need to be able to chart and document progress toward your goal. One way to measure your progress is to document your performance at set intervals. In the above example, you may want to time your one-mile run once a month so you have a good measurement to see if you are on track.

3. **Set Adjustable Goals.** Goals should be flexible enough to adjust to unexpected challenges without having to quit. An injury or slow progress doesn't need to mean you abandon all your plans; you just ADJUST your plans! In the example above, the runner may need to decrease from 30 seconds to 15 seconds if they are not making good progress towards their goal during their trial runs or increase their training program.

4. **Set Realistic Goals.** Start where you are, and increase your goals accordingly. If you haven't ever run a mile, it is probably not a wise goal to say you want to run three miles! While that may be your long-term goal, in the short-term you may want to shoot for the half-mile and mile on the way to your three mile goal. Progression is healthy and realistic.

5. **Set Time-based Goals.** Look again at the example: reduce the mile-run time by 30 seconds within 5 months. This is specific and time-based. Without a time line there is a tendency to procrastinate or get bored. You may also need to set interim goals with shorter timelines to keep you on track. In general, goals that stretch out beyond 6 months are too long to keep you interested and motivated. Try to re-evaluate your goals every 2-3 months.

Goal setting is an art as well as a science, but if you make sure your goals follow the S.M.A.R.T. formula, you will find you are more likely to stay motivated and reach goal after goal. Many people successfully use this S.M.A.R.T. formula to set both short and long-term training goals.