



HER RESOURCES

A collection of resources designed to provide practical tools for women undergraduate students.

Setting SMART Goals

As ambitious women, we know that setting goals is important. We're always looking to progress, take the next step, and become the best version of ourselves. However, as we get wrapped up in the excitement of setting our sights on a new accomplishment, it can be easy to bite off more than we can chew. We may find ourselves with our eyes on the prize, but our feet running in place, not really sure what steps we need to take to get where we want to go. In this issue of Her Resources, you will be presented with an explanation of setting goals based on the SMART principles, where SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

"WHEN I STARTED COLLEGE, I WASN'T REALLY SURE WHAT KIND OF GOALS IT WAS REALISTIC TO SET FOR MYSELF.

I HAD BEEN A STRAIGHT A STUDENT IN HIGH SCHOOL, BUT I KNEW COLLEGE WASN'T GOING TO BE THE SAME LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY. I DIDN'T WANT TO PUT TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON MYSELF, BUT I ALSO DIDN'T WANT TO ALLOW MYSELF TO SLACK OFF. IT TOOK SOME TIME FIGURING OUT WHERE THE BAR WAS, BUT ONCE I KNEW WHAT FELT ACHIEVABLE, GOAL SETTING BECAME EASIER."

- SOFTWARE ENGINEERING MAJOR



Tools

1

Specific: Make your goal as clear and defined as possible. 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?” Answering these questions will help you understand what the scope of your goal is so that you don’t accidentally waste time trying to accomplish tasks only tangentially related. Moreover, knowing exactly what your goal is can make it seem more manageable and, in turn, make you more motivated to go after it.

Example: Imagine that you are a Computer Science student trying to gain an internship. An example of a specific goal you might set could be, “I want to improve my programming skills to gain a summer internship in New York or California, so that I can get more work experience and jump start my career.”

3

Achievable: Ensure that your goals are realistic and attainable for you. Your goal should be challenging, but not unreasonably outside of your resources or abilities. Don’t fall into a trap of setting goals that depend on factors outside of your control, such as becoming president of a club. Instead, focus your goal on gaining skills that would make you a viable candidate for club president. An achievable goal typically answers these questions: “How can I accomplish this goal?” “How realistic is this goal based on constraints?”

Example: As a programming student, you cannot expect to create a complex computer game overnight. An achievable goal for a beginner programmer might be to recreate a simple card game in your most challenging language to improve your skills.

Notes from the Authors

Setting goals can seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be! I've found that setting small goals in my everyday life in the form of a to-do list can help keep me on task in pursuit of my larger ambitions. I attempt to shape all my goals in a SMART fashion so that I know I will be able to make active progress toward them every day. - Kristen Tan, B.E.

I credit a huge part of my success to the fact that I set SMART goals. From small tasks such as completing a homework assignment to large goals such as landing my first full time job by a certain date, I make sure that my goals are organized in such a way that I can measure my success. Keeping them time-bound and relevant has been key to keeping me on track, and I will continue to create SMART goals to further improve myself. - Caralyn Cyr, M.E.

2

Measurable: Set goals that you can quantify by some metric. This will help you determine how far you’ve progressed and how far you still have to go. A goal that is measurable might answer the questions: “How much?” “How many?” “How will I know when it is accomplished?”

Example: You might measure your goal of improving your programming skills by periodically taking an online coding assessment and counting the number of questions you answer correctly each time.

4

Relevant: All goals that you set should matter to you. Your goals should be relevant to your situation, whether that be setting you up for success at your school, in your career, or in your personal development. If a goal matters to you, you will have the drive to carry through with it. Relevant goals should answer “yes” to the following questions: “Does this seem worthwhile?” “Is this the right time?” “Does this match my other efforts/needs?”

Example: A relevant goal for a student in Computer Science would be to become fluent in a coding language, such as C++.

5

Time-Bound: Lofty goals are great, but you don’t want to have a goal sitting around for years without progress. When goals are time-bound, it allows you to prioritize them. By setting a target date for your goal, you give yourself a deadline to focus on and the ability to create a schedule and plan. Goals that are time bound should answer these questions: “When?” “What can I do 6 months from now?” “What can I do 6 weeks from now?” “What can I do today?”

Example: Let's say your final project in a class has a presentation component that is scheduled on May 1st. You might set a goal for yourself to complete the project by April 26th to allow time to rehearse your presentation in advance.

Tips inspired by - “SMART Goals: How to Make Your Goals Achievable” by the Mind Tools Content Team

Further Reading

“**S.M.A.R.T. Goals**” provided by YourCoach
 “**SMART Goals: A How to Guide**” provided by the
 University of California
 “**SMART Goals: Definition and Examples**” provided
 by Indeed.com