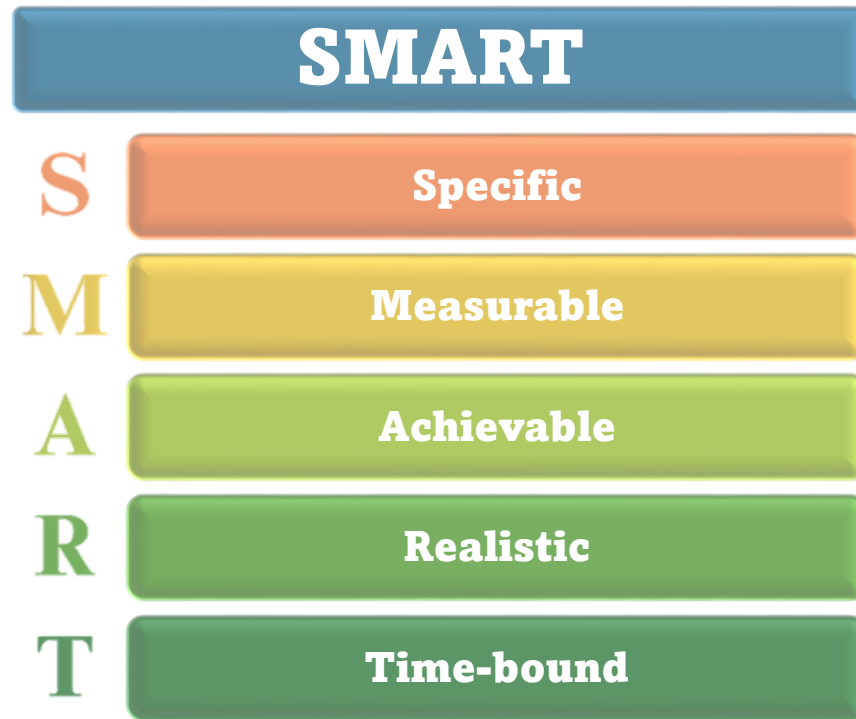


How to write SMART goals



Writing SMART goals is all about breaking down your objectives into smaller, more manageable components that are easy to track and achieve. Here's a simple step-by-step guide to make the goal-setting process a breeze.

Specific

Keep in mind that you're setting your SMART goal to attain a specific objective—not a broad one. You don't just want any initiative to succeed; you want your specific project to succeed. To make sure you can achieve them, make sure your goals are specific to what you're working on.

For example, instead of creating a goal to raise more money, you might create a goal to raise \$2,000 by the end of the year. This is much more specific and gives you a roadmap to work off of. In this case, you can break down how much you need to raise each day to hit your goal and then create an action plan that enables you to hit that number every day.

Measurable

The "M" in SMART stands for measurable, which helps you evaluate the success or failure of your project. Your goals should have some sort of objective way to measure them—whether that's a deadline, a number, a percent change, or some other measurable element. One way to do this is with benchmarks. Benchmarks show you what's "normal" for specific, recurring scenarios in your chapter, so you know what to expect. Using standardized benchmarks, you can set more relevant goals that are easier to measure.

For example, let's say you have a benchmark showing that you typically have four more active members attending chapter meetings in the spring than in the winter. You can then use that benchmark to set measurable goals to track progress for both the launching of new fundraisers and the expectation of participation within the membership. You can also use a benchmark of 1 new member in attendance during the winter months and 5 new member attendance in the spring to ensure that you are on the right track for increased attendance.

Achievable

You don't want your goals to be easy to achieve, but you also want to make sure you're setting goals that you could, conceivably, hit. Achievable says that your goals shouldn't be totally outside the realm of possibility. Ask yourself this question: Is the goal within your project scope? If not, it's not Achievable.

For example, let's say you want to learn to speak Spanish in order to be competitive in your field. If you've never spoken a word of Spanish before, you can't expect to be fluent by next month. That simply isn't an achievable goal. However, you could set a goal to learn from your foreign language app for 20 minutes every day. By establishing a consistent practice, you can set a more achievable goal. What about stretch goals—are those achievable?

Stretch goals are goals that are purposefully challenging. For example, if you usually get 30,000 monthly visitors to your website, a stretch goal would be to get 50,000 monthly visitors. That's a big increase! But this stretch goal is still within the realm of possibility. Make sure you make your stretch goals ambitious, not impossible—like aiming to go from 30,000 monthly visitors to 300,000 monthly visitors, for example.

Realistic

The “A” and “R” of SMART are closely related. In addition to setting attainable goals, you also want to set Realistic ones. For example, maybe a goal is achievable, but getting there would require every team member to work overtime for six weeks straight. Even though it might be an achievable goal, it's not a realistic one. Make sure yours is both by creating a clear resource management plan.

Using our attainable goal example of learning to speak Spanish, the goal of setting 20 minutes aside each day to practice Spanish is both realistic and achievable. On the other hand, a goal to practice speaking Spanish for two hours every day is probably not realistic for most working adults, even though it's technically achievable.

Time-bound

Your SMART goal should have an end date. Without a time limit, your project could drag on, have unclear success metrics, and suffer from scope creep. Deadlines provide a sense of urgency so that short-term tasks don't drag into long-term goals unnecessarily. If you haven't already, make sure you outline a clear project timeline.

Deadlines are crucial to implementing goals, since they pretty much force you to take action. If you want to have more focus time at work, you can decide to set a goal to only check your email for 30 minutes every day. But without a deadline, it's easy to brush it off. Imagine instead if you set a goal to only check your email for 30 minutes every day for one week—now, it starts to feel more attainable.