

**HOW TO SET REALISTIC GOALS:
A KEY TO ACHIEVEMENT**
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Behavioral psychologists believe that goals are important because they provide focus and direction. Goals allow people to plan ahead, accomplish tasks, and move forward. Goals can be altered, updated, or changed completely. Rather than feeling like victims, goal-oriented people usually feel a sense of achievement when setting and achieving goals. Without goals, people drift through life without any sense of direction or purpose. People can learn a simple tip from the way children achieve goals: They believe. Achieving goals requires action plus time. Most people overestimate what they can achieve in a short period of time, yet they underestimate what that can achieve over a long period of time. One of the main reasons that people fail to achieve their goals is because they fail to define their *objectives*, which are the concrete, specific steps that one takes to achieve a goal. Whereas goals are often more future-oriented, objectives are the specific things that a person does each day to make progress toward the goal.

Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) gave good advice when he observed, "Go as far as you can see. When you get there, you will be able to see farther." One way to start is to set goals that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed (i.e., with a target date). The following guidelines provide some tips for setting and reaching goals successfully.

Decide what *you* want.

Find out what it takes to succeed.

Set action goals that are *your* goals.

Make goals clear, concise, and concrete.

Set goals that are specific and realistic.

Make goals measurable and give them a time frame.

Write down your goals and review them every week.

Translate your goals into specific steps (objectives).

Organize yourself around your action steps each day.

Visualize and believe in yourself accomplishing goals.

Surround yourself with people who believe in your goals.

Focus on concrete, specific actions rather than on results.

Break your big goals down into smaller goals (objectives).

Break long-term goals down into shorter-term goals (objectives).

Set daily and weekly objectives (steps toward your short-term goals).

Set up an evaluation system to get regular feedback on your progress.

Focus on a positive approach (e.g., increase, improve) rather than a negative one.

References

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