

## **A goal without a plan is just a wish** -Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Setting a goal means identifying an outcome that you want to achieve, developing a realistic and strategic plan for how to get from where you are to where you want to be, and then implementing the plan through strategic and intentional actions.

To stop making wishes and achieve your goals, make sure they are:

# **S M A R T**

**Specific:** If you aren't able to clearly define exactly what it is you are hoping to achieve, you will have a tough time knowing whether or not you succeed.

**Measurable:** We set goals around changing something in our present to be different in our future. If we are unable to identify how we will measure whether we actually changed, we will have no way of knowing if the goal has been met. We often expect to feel a certain way when our goal has been met, and if we do not have that expected feeling, it can be difficult to recognize achievement. **ALSO THIS MEANS YOU MUST MUST MUST HAVE BASELINE DATA.** Sorry for yelling, but it's really important.

**Achievable:** We all want things. Is the goal you are setting actually even possible? Is it likely? Is it something that is within your locus of control? Are you willing (or able) to DO the things it would take to achieve your goal?

**Relevant:** Does the goal actually do what you want it to do? Is the outcome meaningful to you? Is it motivated by an emotional response that will not sustain you through the process? Does your goal have ANYTHING to do with the 'problem' at hand?

**Time Bound:** Consider your time horizon! IEP goals should be achievable within the duration of the IEP. How LONG is this process, and does it fit within the time you have? What is the level of investment daily, weekly, monthly, yearly to achieve this goal?

## Let's break this down

In this first example, the bolded text is what you can take and use in your goals. The text in parenthesis is providing examples of what specific information you need to include. If it's in parenthesis, you need to change that language to specifically fit the goals and conditions for your student.

**By the** (end of the IEP cycle, end of the first progress reporting period, end of the 202X-XX school year/ end of semester one), **in order to** (why is this goal important or at all relevant to the person's life?) **and following** (preteaching/scaffolding/direct instruction/check in from teacher/the collaborative development of a task list/etc.), **STUDENT will** (what is the thing you want them to be able to do by the date stated at the beginning of the goal? This needs to be measurable) **with** (level of independence/support) **in** (four out of five/80%/90%) **of opportunities as measured by** (teacher observation/SLP data collection/teacher and student report/etc.).

## The SMART part

Let's apply the SMART goal criteria (with color coding) to this goal example. Are all five colors represented in the goal? Are S,M,A, & T colors represented in the present level or baseline?

**Specific**      **Measurable**      **Achievable**      **Relevant**      **Time Bound**

Goal:

**By the** (end of the IEP cycle, end of the first progress reporting period, end of the 202X-XX school year/ end of semester one), **in order to** (why is this goal important or at all relevant to the person's life?) **and following** (preteaching/scaffolding/direct instruction/check in from teacher/the collaborative development of a task list/etc.), **STUDENT will** (what is the thing you want them to be able to do by the date stated at the beginning of the goal? This needs to be measurable) **with** (level of independence/support) **in** (four out of five/80%/90%) **of opportunities as measured by** (teacher observation/SLP data collection/teacher and student report/etc.).

Baseline data:

**Currently, STUDENT is** (state specific goal) **in** (data\* that is measurable and IN THE SAME FORMAT AS THE GOAL DATA) **opportunities with** (level of independence/support)

\* You want to ensure that the student's present level aligns with an achievable target in your goal. 10% of opportunities with pre-teaching, and one-on-one adult support with visual and verbal cues for each individual task does not suggest that 80% mastery independently over the course of a semester is achievable.



**Not everyone's brain works the same way. So here's a different way of laying out this information.** This is the same goal as earlier, but in a format where the bolded text (what you can copy/paste into your own goal writing document) is farthest to the left...and there's a blank template!

**By the** (end of the IEP cycle, end of the first progress reporting period, end of the 202X-XX school year/ end of semester one),  
**in order to** (why is this goal important or at all relevant to the person's life?) **and following** (preteaching/scaffolding/direct instruction/check in from teacher/the collaborative development of a task list/etc.),  
**STUDENT will** (what is the thing you want them to be able to do by the date stated at the beginning of the goal? This needs to be measurable) **with** (level of independence/support) **in** (four out of five/80%/90%)  
**of opportunities as measured by** (teacher observation/SLP data collection/teacher and student report/etc.).

Baseline data:

**Currently, STUDENT is** (state specific goal)  
**in** (data\* that is measurable and IN THE SAME FORMAT AS THE GOAL DATA)  
**opportunities with** (level of independence/support)

**Goal Template:**

By the \_\_\_\_\_  
 in order to \_\_\_\_\_  
 and following \_\_\_\_\_  
 STUDENT will \_\_\_\_\_  
 with \_\_\_\_\_  
 in \_\_\_\_\_  
 of opportunities as measured by \_\_\_\_\_

**Baseline Data:**

Currently, student is \_\_\_\_\_  
 in \_\_\_\_\_  
 opportunities with \_\_\_\_\_



**PRACTICE!**

Read the following (real live) IEP goals. Do they have all of the elements of a SMART goal? If so, identify them. If not, what are they missing? Can you write a SMARTer goal?

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Category: Social/emotional skills

**Goal:**

By the next annual review, during a student-teacher conference, when asked to identify a current personal emotion on an emotions chart, STUDENT will select the visual icon that represents the emotion STUDENT currently feels, for 4 out of 5 emotion identification activities.

**Present Level:**

STUDENT is new to SCHOOL, we have no present levels on this goal at this time. Effectively a "New Goal". 0/5

**Is this a smart goal that is ready for implementation? Why or why not?**

**What, if anything, would you change or tweak to make it 'SMARTER?'**

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Category: Workplace Behavior

**Goal:**

STUDENT will increase their work completion from 1/10 to at least 8/10 daily in 5 out of 5 consecutive data reporting opportunities. The teacher will collect data weekly using tracking sheets. Progress towards this goal will be reported quarterly. The occupational therapist (OT/OTA) will support this goal indirectly.

**Present Level:**

Baseline Score

(4/6/24): 1/10

**Is this a smart goal that is ready for implementation? Why or why not?**

**What, if anything, would you change or tweak to make it 'SMARTER?'**

Category: Classroom/School Skills

**Goal:**

In order to support the development of STUDENT'S time management and planning/prioritization skills, by the end of the IEP cycle, when assigned an academic task and given a written 'steps' list and a verbal cue to review the assignment requirements first, STUDENT will a) estimate how long the task will take them to complete, b) time themselves engaging with the task to completion, and c) report a completion time (with an error of margin of 20 minutes) that reflects their estimated time in 4 out of 5 opportunities as measured by student reporting and teacher collected data.

**Present Level:**

Currently, with one verbal prompt to the classroom and a written task list on the board, STUDENT estimates the time it will take them to complete an academic task within an error margin of 20 minutes (underestimated) in 4/10 opportunities.  
error margin of 30 minutes (underestimated) in 2/10 opportunities.  
error margin of 45 minutes (underestimated) in 2/10 opportunities.  
error margin of 1+ hours (underestimated) in 1/10 opportunities  
error margin of 1+ days (underestimated) in 1/10 opportunities  
At this time, STUDENT has not overestimated the time a task will take to complete.

STUDENT is implementing the strategy of adding half time to the original estimate in order to account for their consistent underestimations with a verbal cue from the teacher.

Teacher provides a timer for the class at the front of the classroom, and STUDENT remembers to check the timer and record their completion time independently in 6/10 opportunities.

**Is this a smart goal that is ready for implementation? Why or why not?**

**What, if anything, would you change or tweak to make it 'SMARTER?'**