

This handout will explain what **SMART Goals** are and how to set them for academic purposes. **SMART Goals** are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-limited.

Here is a sample of an academic goal that is not SMART: *I want to do well in all of my classes.*

This goal leaves a lot of questions: How will the student know if he/she does well? What does “well” mean? Is it even possible to do “well” in all of his/her classes? What is the deadline? Why is this important?

Here is how you might revise this to create a SMART Goal: *I will achieve a 90% or better in my major courses this term in preparation for my graduate school applications.*

This goal is: **specific** because it clearly identifies what the student wants to do; **measurable** because it states a quantifiable goal of 90%; **attainable** because the student limits it to “major courses;” **relevant** because it applies to his/her graduate school applications; and **time-limited** because there is a clear deadline.

Here are some questions you should ask yourself as you work on creating **SMART Goals**:

Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time-limited
What do I want to do?	How will I know when I reach my goal?	Is this goal reasonable? Why or why not?	Why is this goal important to me?	What is my specific deadline for reaching this goal?
How can I focus this goal?	Is there a number or some other unit of measure that I am trying to achieve?	Can I split this goal into smaller steps?	How will reaching this goal help me in the future?	
What strong verb can I use?	Who will be evaluating me?	Will this goal challenge me? Why or why not?		

Here are some tips to think about when creating your **SMART Goals**:

- Make sure your goals are things you can do and don't rely on outside sources. For example, “I want to perform 20 pediatric intubations” isn't a **SMART Goal** because you don't totally control the outcome of how many of these patients you might see. A **SMART Goal** would be “I will achieve an 80% intubation success rate on the first attempt during this clinical rotation.”
- Avoid weak language like “I *want to* complete four hours in the cath lab by the end of this rotation.” Instead, show your commitment with strong action verbs like “I *will* complete at least four hours in the cath lab by the end of this rotation.”
- Be sure that your **SMART Goals** are both attainable *and* challenging. This means that you shouldn't make a goal a normal expectation like passing a course or test but something that will help you improve in a particular area.