

# The S.M.A.R.T. Goal Worksheet

When it comes to managing your tasks, it is very important to have clear goals of what you want to achieve. Without well-defined goals, it is easy to get off track or succumb to procrastination.

However, what is a “clearly” defined goal? Introducing: S.M.A.R.T. Goals

S.M.A.R.T. Goals are commonly associated with Peter Drucker but were first mentioned by George Doran ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART\\_criteria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria)).

There are two important benefits to S.M.A.R.T. Goals over “unstructured” objectives: One - they tend to be easier to understand. That can help you avoid costly mistakes and time spent following unimportant rabbit holes.

Two - you always know exactly if you have achieved them. There is no ambiguity, no maybes or I-believes. You are either there or you are not.

To achieve these two important benefits, S.M.A.R.T. Goals need to have a series of properties. They are identified by the S.M.A.R.T. acronym: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely

If you look at the above-linked Wikipedia article, you’ll see that there are actually many interpretations of what these letters stand for. However, the interpretation listed here is in my experience the most effective.

On the following pages, you’ll find a detailed explanation of what each of these properties is about and why it is important. There’s also ample room to work out your own goal.

## Specific

Specificity helps you make the goal clearly defined. To achieve specificity, make sure your goal answers these four “W”s:

- What? What is it exactly that I want to accomplish?
- Why? Why is this goal important? Go beyond the obvious and dig a little deeper.
- Who? If you are managing a team, specify who is responsible to achieve this goal.
- Which? Which resources are required? Are there any dependencies to other tasks?

Example: If you want to acquire a new skill to use with your coaching clients, a specific goal would be:

I want to acquire the skills and experience necessary to implement SomeMethod by using the SomeName online training program so that I can help my clients achieve SomeResult.

This simple statement answers all four of the above questions.

## Action Step

Write down the answers to these four questions as they relate to your goal.

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## Achievable

Achievability is important for your own (or your team's) morale. If you know that you cannot succeed at a particular task, it becomes a dreaded experience even thinking about it. I am sure you've experienced this before.

To make sure that morale stays high and everybody involved is enthusiastic about the task at hand, answer the question: How realistic is it that I can actually accomplish this goal within the given constraints (like time or number of team members)?

If the answer is that it is not highly realistic, break the goal into sub-tasks that are achievable, extend the time frame, or add additional resources or team members.

## Stretch Goals

One word of caution: Managers love to ask their teams to achieve stretch goals. A stretch goal is a goal that is just a little more challenging than the team can currently handle. While it is important to challenge a team to grow, it can be incredibly demotivating if all you are handing them are stretch goals that lead to failure in the end.

The human brain is wired to release pleasure hormones if a task is achieved. If you never allow your team to experience this, morale will drop and in the end, you'll achieve the opposite of what you wanted.

So make sure, that your goals are balanced. While it is OK to throw in a stretch goal from time to time, make sure there are ample occasions, where the team can celebrate a real win.

Oh, and just to clarify, this is equally important if you are a team of one.

## Action Step

Answer the question: How realistic is it that I can actually accomplish this goal within the given constraints (like time or number of team members)?

If the answer is not favorable, break down the goal into sub-tasks or adjust the available resources.

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## Timely

Timeliness covers with two separate concerns:

- Is now the right time to tackle this goal?
- What is the deadline for completing this goal?

## Right Time

A goal can check all the other boxes, but still be not the right one to work on now. There might be other higher-priority tasks on the list. There might be external factors that make the current time less than optimal for this goal. Therefore it is important that you ask (and answer) this question, before embarking to achieve a goal.

## Deadline

Deadlines are one of the strongest forces to make things happen and squash procrastination. But, when setting a deadline, make sure it is not arbitrary and also make sure that the goal stays achievable.

Our brain has a pretty evolved “BS detector”, so when it encounters an arbitrary deadline, it likely will completely disregard it. With that, the deadline loses all its anti-procrastination power.

For why it is important to pick a deadline that is in line with the goal’s achievability, check back in the “Achievable” section.

## Action Step

Answer these two questions:

- Is now the right time to tackle this goal?
- What is the deadline for completing this goal?

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