

Setting SMART Goals

Goal setting is one of the most important parts of successful behavior change. Without goals, you cannot develop a plan because you do not know where you want to go! It is like going on a trip but never deciding on where you want to end your trip. To succeed, you need to create both long-term and short-term goals.

Short-term goals are those that can be completed within a brief period – this week, this month. For example, if you have been very inactive, a short-term goal might be to walk around the neighborhood for 10 minutes each night after work for the upcoming week. Here is a way to remember how to make a short-term goal and Be **SMART!**

Specific: Define the activity in length and location. Make it clear. For example, walk around the block for 10 minutes after work.

Measurable: At the end of the week, you can measure on whether you walked each day after work. "I want to get in better shape," would be hard to measure.

Action-based: The goal should be an activity instead of something general, such as improving fitness or losing weight. It should be something that you will actually be doing.

Realistic: The location for the activity should be easy to get to, and the length of the activity should not be longer than what you are able to do. Sometimes, goals are so far out of reach that they become a source of disappointment. They should encourage you to keep motivated, instead of making you feel like you failed.

Time: This goal should have a specific period. It should not be too open-ended. The goal specifies the upcoming week. Without a time specific approach, you might be tempted to put off your exercise.

Short-term goals can provide encouragement and focus. By creating a series of short-term goals, you can build toward your long-term goals.

Long-term goals are those that you can achieve in the future – three months to a year from now. With careful planning, meeting short-term goals should lead to accomplishing your long-term goals.

10 Tips for Setting SMART Goals

- 1 Set SMART specific activity time or times**

Devote a few times throughout the week for fun physical activity. Try doing something active after dinner or begin the weekend with a Saturday morning walk. Make a contract with yourself.
- 2 Plan ahead and track your progress**

Write your activity plans on a calendar. Ask others for help in planning the activity. Check it off after completing each activity.
- 3 Include work around the house**

Yard work and other active chores around the house count! Raking, weeding, planting, sweeping, mopping or vacuuming all can be considered exercise.
- 4 Use what is available**

Plan activities that require little or no equipment or cost. Examples include walking, jogging, sitting exercises and dancing. Look for programs at your community center, senior center or junior college that are low cost or free.
- 5 Build new skills**

Enroll in classes you might enjoy such as yoga, dance, tennis or bowling. This will keep things fun and interesting, and introduce new skills!
- 6 Plan for all weather conditions**

Choose some activities that do not depend on the weather conditions. Try mall walking, indoor swimming, or active video games. Enjoy outdoor activities when the weather is nice.
- 7 Turn off the TV**

Set a rule that you can't spend longer than 2 hours per day playing video games, watching TV, and using the computer. Instead of a TV show, dance to favorite music, or go for a walk.
- 8 Start small**

Walk to your mailbox, park farther away from the store, take the stairs instead of the escalator. Take the dog for a long walk, play outside with your children or grandchildren.
- 9 Include other friends or family members**

Invite others to join your activity. This is a great way for you to spend time with friends while being physically active. Plan parties with active games such as bowling or an obstacle course, sign up for family programs at the YMCA, or join a recreational club.
- 10 Treat yourself with fun physical activity**

When it is time to celebrate, do something active as a reward. Plan a trip to the zoo, park, or lake to treat yourself.