

How to Set SMART Goals

SMART goals are a way to decide both what to do, and how to do it in a way that helps determine whether or not goals were achieved. Two of the letters below may be new to you, even if you have set SMART goals in the past. At the ASPCA, we use the term “Ambitious” so that our goals are challenging (yet achievable). We use the term “Relevant” to ensure that our efforts as an organization are aligned.

S

Specific

- Targets a precise area
- Answers these questions:
 - What do I want to accomplish?
 - Why is this goal important?
 - Who is involved?
 - Where does it take place?
 - Which resources or constraints are involved?

M

Measureable

- Quantifies or suggests an indicator of progress:
 - How much?
 - How many?
 - How will I know when it is accomplished?
 - How will I know I've been successful?

A

Ambitious

- Identifies what is achievable, and what could be achieved with just a bit more effort, creativity or persistence.

R

Relevant

- Aligns your goal with departmental goals
- A goal that matters to you; has purpose
- You should be able to answer "yes" to the following:
 - Does this seem worthwhile?
 - Is this the right time?
 - Does this support our other efforts, needs or priorities?

T

Time-Bound

- Establishes a clear time frame for when this goal can be achieved (e.g., end of Q3, by July 15)
- Helps you decide what you can do today, what you can do in a month, and what you can do in six months.

How to Create a SMART Goal

Once you've determined which departmental objective your goal will help accomplish, use the following SMART formula to draft your goal:

To [action verbs] [specifics] by [date]
and/or
By [date] to [action verbs], [specifics]

For example:

SMART Goal	Not a SMART Goal
Identify an appropriate case for an ABVP style case report and conduct a thorough literature search related to the topics relevant to the case, cataloguing references in a reference management software program by March 31, 2023.	Review cases and begin to read journal articles related to those cases.
By June 1, 2023, schedule and conduct 3 site visits at shelters in the Baltimore, MD area.	Work towards the requirement to visit 15 shelters.

Checklist for Setting SMART Goals

- Does the goal target a specific area for development?
- Does the goal avoid generalities and use action verbs?
- Does the goal clearly define expectations in terms of actions and outcomes?
- Does the goal define specific metrics that can be objectively measured?
- Is the goal challenging, with a little bit of stretch?
- Is the goal aligned with organizational or departmental goals?
- Is the goal a worthwhile investment of resources?
- Is this the right time to accomplish this goal?
- Do you have the resources you need to be able to accomplish this goal?
- Does the goal specify a date or elapsed amount of time by which it needs to be completed?