

# SETTING goals for success



Mayland Community College  
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## Goals Turn Dreams Into Reality

If you only dreamed, you would not be reaching your goals. If you only thought about what kind of future you wanted, but did nothing to make it happen, your dreams would stay dreams. Your goals are the vision of what your future will be like. If you put time and energy into making them realities.

Goals offer you wonderful advantages that dreams may not. They get you up out of bed in the morning. They add structure to your life and energy to stay on track. They are the blueprint for the plan you are building for your future. Goals give your life purpose and meaning.

Without goals, your life is like a boat without a rudder, moving aimlessly, blown by the wind, driven by the currents and off course most of the time. Even worse, you'll find that others will steer your life and make decisions for you. Without goals, you give away your personal power and right to make choices and decisions for yourself.

If you don't presently have dreams for your future, you're not alone. Many people search for years to find their purpose in life or a particular goal to strive toward. They don't realize that all of their major accomplishments - graduating from high school, college, finding a mate, getting a job, buying a home, a car, etc. - started out as goals. They required thought, planning, energy, action and time to become realities.

The most successful people in life have a clear idea of their goals and the drive to pursue them. They write their goals down and devise steps to reach them. Are there things you would like to accomplish but are afraid to risk possible disappointment or failure? Perhaps you are not sure how to get started or how to stay motivated. This module will help you learn the skills needed for successful goal setting and decision making. You'll learn how to tap your inner resources, find your "passion" and use your energy to pursue what you want most in life. If you are ready to take an important step toward your future success, keep reading.

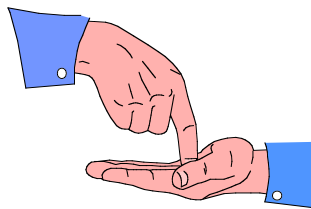


## Goals are Specific and Have Timelines

A goal is something you desire. It may be a material goal, such as a new car or job, or an abstract goal, such as greater peace of mind or a meaningful relationship with another person. A goal can be **short-term**, accomplished in a day, a week or a month, or **long-term**, spanning several months or years. A goal should have several characteristics: it should be believable and attainable. It should be **specific** and have a **time line**, or a date by which it will be accomplished. Why? A non-specific goal may not give you a definite idea of what you want to strive for. A goal without a time line may never be reached.

Here is an example of an unclear goal without a time limit: *“I want a better job.”*

Being specific, you will ask yourself some questions: *“What kind of job do I want? What should the work involve? What should the salary be? Who would I be working with? What would the hours be? What would make this a good job for me? When do I want to reach this goal? How will I get there? Who do I need to talk to? Does such a job exist?”*



A specific goal with a time limit would be similar to the following:

***I want a job that involves working with computers, in a pleasant, small office environment, working with friendly people, not too far from home, with a good salary I can afford to live on. I want to find this job within three months of graduating.***

From this specific goal statement, you can begin to formulate a plan of action.

### **Plan of Action:**

*I will talk to my teachers and the Career Counselor.*

*I will contact employment agencies.*

*I will talk to family members.*

*I will develop a good resume and begin sending it out.*

Some goals take more time to reach than others. If education or training is required to reach a goal, plan on spending quality time preparing for it. You might have to consider factors such as family and personal needs, financial needs, time involved, etc. You may find that you have to make certain changes in your life or modify your goal if the situation calls for it. For example, if you find that, after talking to employment agencies, the job you want is farther away than you hoped, you may have to take steps to relocate; otherwise you may need to change your job goal.



## Goals Reflect Your Values

Goals are driven primarily by your needs and your values. Values are the beliefs and standards by which you live or the things that are most important to you. If living in the mountains is an important value of yours, then relocating elsewhere may not be a part of your career goal.

Values guide your decisions and behaviors. A person who values honesty does not resort to cheating, stealing or other dishonest behaviors. A person who values harmony in relationships does not seek out the company of disruptive people who take away harmony. As you choose your goals, take time to think about how compatible they are with your values.

**What do you value that will influence the goals you set for yourself? What things are meaningful to you? Money, popularity, recognition, education, hot cars, travel, family, honesty, integrity, love, etc.**

**The things I value most are...**



## Goals Require Commitment

It takes commitment to achieve a goal. If you have ever wondered why some people are successful in their lives while others are not, it usually has something to do with their willingness to stick to their goal, despite disappointments and failures. They continue to take action and strive toward their goals even when disappointments, failures or criticism comes. This is not to say that they stubbornly refuse to listen to practical advice or constructive criticism, when it is called for. True commitment means keeping in mind the image of what you want and putting in the time and effort to get it. It takes courage to remain committed to a goal in the face of hardship or failure.

*The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.  
Eleanor Roosevelt*

## Roles Determine Your Goals

How many of the following roles are you playing: friend, employee, student, employer, athlete, brother, sister, daughter, son, husband, wife, church member, roommate, parent, grandparent, tutor, musician, neighbor, volunteer? Most people identify four to seven major life roles. How do you like the way you are playing your roles? What dreams do you have for each?

Once you know what you want for each role you play, you are well on your way to having goals. For example:

**Student role:** I want to graduate in two years, transfer to a 4-year college and get a Bachelor's degree in two more years.

**Spouse role:** I want to spend more time with my partner and have a good relationship.

**Employee role:** I want to find a better job, doing work I enjoy, with better pay.

### Exercise: Identifying Your Roles and Goals

**Step I:** List your major life roles and write what you want for each particular role (as shown above).

	<u>ROLE</u>	<u>GOAL</u>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

**Step II:** Take **one** of your roles listed above and write a dream statement. A dream is the highest aspiration or major accomplishment you wish to achieve for that goal. Use your creative mind and THINK BIG!

**[Example: Student/employee role:** I want to complete a Master's degree in Nursing in two years and work as a Nurse Anesthetist in a large hospital.]

## Courage and Commitment

Your dream will become a reality if you commit to achieving it. This means that you will take all the steps necessary to accomplish your dream, with unwavering courage and commitment. This gives you the energy and motivation to persevere toward your goal.

Along the way, keep in mind that...

**Failures are merely lessons:** The greatest, most successful people fail often, because they are willing to accept failure as stepping stones and lessons to learn from as they progress toward their goals.

**Flexibility is a must:** At times you may have to rethink or change your plan due to life changes, changes in the world, the economy, etc. The more flexible you are, the less stress you will generate, and the more successful you will be.



## Visualization Gives Life to Your Goal

Every goal starts with a vision and every vision is filled with energy, excitement and emotion. If you've ever talked to someone striving toward a big goal who is almost there, you probably heard them use expressions like, "I could see it...it felt so good...it was such a rush...I could almost taste it...etc." It sounds like reaching a goal satisfies you on a sensory level - and it does! Having a visual image of your goal helps to strengthen your commitment. It keeps you strong in times of challenge, giving you a clear picture of the desired result.

### How to Visualize

1. **Relax.** Sit back, get comfortable, take some deep breaths and let your mind go into that relaxed state where creative ideas can form. This is called the alpha brain wave state – a normal state of relaxation.
2. **Use the Present Tense.** Imagine yourself experiencing your success now. Use the present tense as you narrate the story of your success.

*I am walking across the stage to receive my diploma. I have passed all my classes with high grades. The dean is pinning an honors medal on me.*

3. **Use all Five Senses.** Imagine the scene concretely and specifically. Use your senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch.

*I see myself in my cap and gown. I am walking tall and proud. I am so excited. I hear the sounds of the speakers giving their speeches, the clapping as I walk across the stage. I smell the flowers in the room. I am holding my diploma in my hand, feeling its soft vinyl cover. Everyone is congratulating me and shaking my hand.*

3. **Feel the Feelings.** Our emotions give power to motivate us when we are working toward a goal. You have to FEEL the experience, just as if it is really happening in the moment, right NOW.

*I'm so happy I want to laugh and cry. I have never felt so good and so proud of myself. It is all worth it. I made it! I reached my goal! It feels great!*

All great accomplishments start with a vision and all successful people use the power of visualization to reach their goals. Keeping your commitment to your goal will undoubtedly be just as important as actually achieving your goal. When you are on course to a personally meaningful dream, you learn and grow in ways that you cannot imagine today.

**Exercise:** Write a **visualization** of the exact moment in the future when you are experiencing the accomplishment of your biggest dream in your role as a student. Use **present tense** and incorporate all your senses.

## Affirmations

Affirmations are positive statements that fortify and strengthen us to achieve our goals. They are personally reinforcing, energizing and self-motivating. Affirmations help correct negative concepts we have developed about ourselves, depending on our life experiences. A person with a negative self-image or low self-esteem will find it hard to justify striving hard to reach a goal, feeling undeserving or incapable. If you have negative programming that needs to go, you are no different from most people. It is time, though, to re-program your mind and affirm yourself as a worthy and capable person.

See if you are holding onto any of the following negative affirmations. Replace them with positive affirmations.

**Negative Affirmation**

**Positive Affirmation**

I'm unworthy.

I am worthy of all the good life can bring.

I'm a loser.

I am capable of succeeding at anything I work hard at.

I can't get ahead.

I have all the ability and talent I need to get ahead.

I'm not smart enough.

I'm intelligent and I learn easily. I'm a good student.

I never was good at...

I am getting better and better at...

I don't have the time.

I have all the time I need.

I'm a failure.

I learn from my mistakes and progress every day.

I'm not strong enough.

I am strong, intelligent and persistent.

I'm not disciplined.

I am becoming more disciplined in all that matters.

**Add any of your own:**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Intention Statements**

Like affirmations, intention statements provide positive energy and power to move you forward in the direction of your goal. They are written in the present tense, are positive and present a clear picture of what you want to accomplish. Intentions statements can and should be used daily. They can be used for anything you want to accomplish and do well at, such as better study habits, better test grades, or more fulfilling relationships.

Imagine what might happen if a person approaches a task with the following intention:

***“I am going to fail. I’m not good at this. I never could get this. It’s too hard. I just don’t have what it takes.”***

What do you think the result of such negative programming will be?

If your goal is to be a better student, you can devise an intention statement for the task of studying more effectively. Ask yourself first, “Why am I studying” and “What do I want to gain from it?” Every time you sit down to study, set your intention.

***I, \_\_\_\_\_, intend to get the most out of this study time. I intend to stay focused and concentrate on what I am learning. I intend to understand what I read. I do not allow distractions to slow my progress. I take good notes, make note cards for review, and commit this information to memory. When I take tests, I intend to remember everything that I studied.***

***Write your own intention statement for one of the goals you wish to accomplish:***

I, \_\_\_\_\_, intend to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The practice of visualization, affirmations, and intention statements allows you to replace old, worn out, limiting, negative mind chatter with fresh, positive and self-promoting ideas and concepts. They fuel the desire to reach your goal. They give you energy to meet your daily challenges. They enhance your commitment. Best of all, they remove needless barriers to your success.

Using these three simple techniques will transform your attitudes and expectations about life. They are the deciding factors in creating a successful future. **They make the journey toward your goal fun!**

## Quiz

1. Match the ideas in the left column with the statements on the right.

### A goal must be:

- Conceivable
- Believable
- Achievable
- Measurable
- Desirable
- Presented without alternative
- Not injurious

- A. You must want to do it.
- B. You can put it into words.
- C. You have one specific plan.
- D. You/others won't be hurt by it.
- E. You must be able to do it.
- F. You must know you can do it.
- G. It must be stated in specific terms.

2. Explain how your values affect your goals:

3. Write down one of your short-term goals (to accomplish within a month):

4. Write down on your long-term goals (to accomplish within a year):

5. Identify 3 things that could be barriers to reaching your goals.

6. List 3 things you can do to remove these obstacles.

## Goals Require Decisions

Decisions are like **power plugs** that allow the energy to flow in order to help you reach your goals. Not making decisions is like sitting in the driver's seat of a car but not starting the engine. You simply won't go anywhere. Once you've made your decision, or turned on the engine, you can steer yourself in the right direction. If you run into a traffic jam or have an accident, these are temporary setbacks. Do you jump out of your car and run away because of them? Of course not. You keep your goal in mind, take risks as needed, overcome obstacles as they arise. Eventually you reach your destination.

You make decisions everyday. Some are minor, such as what you will eat for lunch, and some are major, such as what college you will attend and what career you will pursue. Some decisions are made on the "spur of the moment," while others take time and careful planning.

If you lack confidence in making decisions, you are not alone. You may have learned patterns of thinking that cause you to distrust your decision-making ability. Children who are never given the opportunity to make decisions, or who are punished for failures, do not approach decision-making easily. Regardless of your background, you can learn the skills of decision-making. Making decisions, like setting goals, involves being clear about what you want, having the information you need, knowing your values, and knowing the alternatives available.

**The basic rules of good decision-making are:**

1. Know exactly what you want.
2. Know what information you need.
3. Know your values.
4. Know your alternatives.

Compare the two statements:

*I want to eat food for lunch.*

*I want to eat a roast turkey club with pickles and chips.*

It isn't difficult to figure out which one is more specific. The next thing you would need to know is, where can you get such a lunch and if it isn't available, what alternatives are there?

**Information:** If you have too little information, your decision may not end up as satisfying as you would like.

**Example:** The menu does not include a turkey club. **-OR-** The turkey is old and doesn't taste very good.

**Alternatives:** If your first decision cannot be fulfilled, what alternatives are there?

**Example:** You might try the egg salad instead, but you remember that you are trying to cut down on your cholesterol.

**Values:** What is important to you – eating healthy or eating something tempting but not good for you?

**Example:** You value your health and do not want to eat the wrong things. You decide on a salad with low-fat dressing instead.

*It is difficult to make decisions  
if you are not sure what you need and value.*

## 7 Steps To Making Good Decisions

- Step 1:** Define the problem or situation. Gather all data and relevant information.
- Step 2:** Consider all possibilities. Use your imagination and brainstorm all possible courses of action and alternatives.
- Step 3:** Weigh the consequences of each course of action. Consider the possible advantages and disadvantages of each course of action.
- Step 4:** Weigh the alternatives. Use your feelings and judgment to decide how deeply you care about the effects of each alternative.
- Step 5:** Decide on a course of action. Make a choice among the best alternatives.
- Step 6:** Take action now!
- Step 7:** Evaluate the result of your action. If you experienced results other than what you expected, go back, look at your steps and rework the process. You may need to change your course of action or accept the results as they occur.

**A person's ability to choose, as well as  
his/her right to choose, is the essence of freedom.**

## Self-Motivation at Work

You are well on your way to setting goals and making wise decisions. You are aware of the importance of planning, of knowing your values, of weighing alternatives, and of fortifying yourself with visualization, affirmations, and intention statements. So what could possibly stand in your way?

Suppose that halfway through the process, you fail a course, or you get sick and have to drop out, or finances do not allow you to continue in school? "Oh well," you might think, "That's life." Does this mean that your goals and decisions were all for nothing? Absolutely not! Setbacks and failures are merely temporary obstacles that must be handled along the way to your goal. All goals and all decisions involve risk. They may postpone your deadline, or even change the original goal, but they should **never** discourage or stop you.

### When setbacks occur...

- Re-evaluate your plan and make changes where needed.
- Don't allow discouragement to set in.
- Be flexible and confident when things don't go as planned.
- Stay motivated. Continue to move toward what you want.

*Motivation is doing what you said you were going to do  
long after the mood you said it in has passed.*

## Your Life Plan



Studies have shown that people who write down their goals are more successful and accomplish more in life. In this exercise, you will write down your life plan (for the next 5 years). Your plan requires that you think about meaningful aspects of your life and develop a goal statement for each of the following areas: **Financial, Career, Education, Relationships, and Physical.**

Think in terms of how you want your life to be five years from now? Do you want to be in the same place you are today? What do you want to accomplish? How do you want to design your life? Where do you want to be?

### **Goal in 5 years**

**Financial:**

**Career:**

**Education:**

**Relationships:**

**Physical:**

Now take **one** of the goals listed above and develop an action plan to begin the process of working toward this goal.

***Example:***

***Goal:*** To get a good job in the field of computer science.

***First step:*** Enroll in college. Attend full-time. Take courses in my major.

***Deadline:*** Complete program by May 2005

***Second Step:*** Write a resume. Explore job market. Interview for jobs. Get hired.

***Deadline:*** July 2005

***Third Step:*** Settle in at work; pursue on-going training to increase skills. Seek advancement.

***Deadline:*** On-going

**Now, it's your turn:**

**Goal:**

**First step:**

**Deadline:**

**Second Step:**

**Deadline:**

**Third Step:**

**Deadline:**

**Add more steps if necessary:**



**Take Action!**

*You are now on your way to designing your future. Think of it as a wonderful journey of discovery and growth. Every new experience you have will enable you to learn more about life and about yourself. You now have the skills and knowledge to set goals and make decisions. You have every reason to believe you will be successful and nothing will stand in your way unless you let it. You know that failures and disappointments are just stepping stones to success and fulfillment. Work with your counselor to ensure that you get the most from this module.*

***Good luck in reaching all your goals!***

