

9 SMART Goal Examples for College Students

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In this article, we are going to review what SMART goals are and why college students should know how to use this goal-setting technique to set the stage for their academic success. Then we will look at 9 specific examples of statements that college students can use to guarantee favorable outcomes in their higher education.

But first, let's review the SMART goal concept.

What Is a SMART Goal?

A SMART goal is one that comes with its own set of instructions on how to complete the goal. When done correctly, a SMART goal statement can turn your vague intention into a concrete course of action. By setting SMART objectives, you're coming up with an intentional strategy to achieve your goals.

While SMART goals exist in a variety of forms, we refer to them here as being goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Let's analyze this acronym one letter at a time:

Specific

Specific goals are well-defined and leave no room for interpretation.

Non-Specific Goal: I want to make good grades.

Specific Goal: In order to get a 3.5 GPA or above, I will spend 2 hours each weekend focusing on studying for each class in addition to completing my assigned work.

Things to Consider: Who? What? When? Where? Why?

Measurable

A measurable goal has specific criteria that allows you to measure your progress at any point.

Non-Measurable Goal: I will do well in English this semester.

Measurable Goal: I will maintain a 92% average in English throughout the semester.

Things to Consider: What is my concrete evidence of progress? How will I know when I've reached my goal?

Achievable

An achievable goal is one that challenges you, but is still possible to obtain.

Non-Achievable Goal: I want to bring my F average up to an A before the semester ends in three weeks.

Achievable Goal: Now that I have graduated with my bachelor's degree, I want to apply to three master's programs.

Things to Consider: How realistic it is to attain this goal? What are the possible barriers that could get in my way of success? Do I have the necessary resources to be successful?

Relevant

Your goals need to matter to you if you want to stay committed. Achieving them needs to benefit you in the long-term.

Irrelevant Goal: I want to start a family. (This is a fine goal to have, but if you're focusing on goals related to going to college, right now is probably not the right time for this goal.)

Relevant Goal: I will graduate with a double major in psychology and sociology.

Things to Consider: Is achieving this goal worthwhile? Why am I doing this? Will reaching this goal get me closer to achieving my ultimate vision? Am I doing this for myself or for someone else?

Time-Bound

This piece is vital, because you may otherwise put off completing your goals indefinitely. You need to set deadlines for your goals so you stay focused and avoid distractions. You can break your goal down to have milestones along the way that will keep you motivated.

Not Time-Bound: I want to get an internship.

Time-Bound: I want to land a paid internship that's related to my major during the summer between junior and senior year.

Things to Consider: What's my deadline? Do I feel a sense of urgency to get to work?

If you work each of these SMART elements into your goal statements, you will be setting yourself up in the right direction to move forward toward success.

Why Should College Students Create SMART Goals?

Setting SMART goals—both short- and long-term—can give college students a feeling of purpose and a sense of individuality. Of course your goals may largely focus on academic success, but think about the other elements of life that are new to those who have recently gained this new sense of independence. **You need to set financial goals, health goals, career goals, and goals related to advocating for yourself, among others.**

Before creating your SMART goals, ask yourself:

- Where do I see myself in five years?
- What would be my dream job at that point?
- Who will be there to support my progress along the way?
- Is there anyone willing to help me stay accountable?
- How can I celebrate reaching my smaller milestones?

Questions like these are important to consider because the answers can help you prioritize your wants and needs for the future—and learning how to set SMART goals will benefit you long after graduation.

This skill will teach you how to continuously improve yourself, which will help you gain a competitive advantage over others who are vying for the same professional positions that you are. **Knowing the simple act of setting productive goals will be a fundamental part of your long-term success.**

So let's take a look at some examples of what SMART goals may look like. You can tweak any of these that feel relevant to your life to fit your own circumstances.

1. “I will exercise at least three times per week during this school year to keep my body healthy and my mind ready to learn.”

S: This student wants to keep an active routine to maintain overall health.

M: This is measured by exercising three times per week.

A: This is an achievable goal as long as this college student can effectively manage their time.

R: This is a relevant goal for anyone who is trying to improve themselves.

T: This goal's deadline is at the end of each week and the end of the year.

2. “I will call my family every Sunday night at 7:00 pm to make sure they remain a central part of my life while I'm completing this new chapter.”

S: This student has a specific plan to maintain familial relationships while living outside of the home.

M: This is measured by calling the family every Sunday night at 7:00.

A: This is an achievable goal for any college student.

R: This is a relevant goal for anyone who has recently made a big change in their life.

T: This goal's deadline is at the end of each week.

3. “I will develop a good rapport with my professors in order to have recommendations upon graduation. I will do this by meeting with each professor within the first week of class to personally introduce myself and learn a bit about their career.

S: This student has a specific plan with a specific purpose.

M: This is measured by the number of professors this student has.

A: This is an achievable goal for any college student.

R: This is a relevant goal for those who want to have positive relationships with their professors.

T: This goal’s deadline is at the end of the first week of classes.

4. “I will receive at least one job offer related to my major by April 20th to avoid losing momentum between studying in college and applying my skills to the real world.”

S: This student has a specific goal.

M: This is measured by receiving one job offer.

A and R: This is an achievable and relevant goal for all college students.

T: This goal’s deadline is April 30.

5. ”In order to graduate college without any credit card debt, I will live within my means until I am offered a job. I will eat one meal out per week and the rest I will eat in the cafeteria. Instead of leaving campus on the weekends, I will look for free on-campus entertainment. Finally, I will offer tutoring services to students who are in younger classes to earn extra money.”

S: This student has a specific goal and a plan to achieve it.

M: This is measured by the amount of debt the student (doesn’t) accrue.

A: With smart money management, this is an achievable goal.

R: This is a relevant goal for those who want to graduate debt-free.

T: This goal’s deadline is whenever the student is offered a job.

6. ”Before graduating, I will sign up for a challenging course that interests me and earn a 92% or above.”

S: This student has a specific goal.

M: This is measured by the grade the student earns in the course.

A: This is an achievable goal.

R: This is a relevant goal for students who want to be well-rounded.

T: This goal's deadline is graduation.

7. “By the end of the first semester, I will have come up with a daily routine that is conducive to my academic schedule. This will help me stay focused on the task at hand and not waste time during the day on pointless endeavors.”

S: This student has a specific goal to stay focused.

M: This is measured by the amount of time left during the day that is unscheduled.

A: This is an achievable goal.

R: This is a relevant goal for students who want to reduce distractions.

T: This goal's deadline is the end of the first semester.

8. “In order to stay grounded throughout college, I will engage in one hour of self-care every Sunday. “

S: This student has a specific goal to stay grounded.

M: This is measured by one hour of each day being spent on self-care.

A: This is an achievable goal.

R: This is a relevant goal for students, as they live demanding lives.

T: This goal's deadline is graduation.

9. “I will get to know at least three networking contacts before December of my senior year. I’ll do this by approaching people I recognize from class in the lunchroom at least once per month to learn a bit about their plans for their future. Having a handful of relevant connections will be helpful as we all move into the same job market.

S: This student has a specific goal and a plan to achieve it.

M: This is measured by making three contacts by approaching people at least once per month.

A: This is an achievable goal.

R: This is a relevant goal for students who will be entering the job market upon graduation.

T: This goal's deadline is December of senior year.

Final Thoughts on SMART Goals for College Students

You can reach almost any goal when you do proper planning and set a deadline that pushes you to carry out the necessary steps. Accomplishments that may have seemed out of reach will suddenly become attainable, and you will recognize that you're worthy of reaching these goals.

When you identify the goals that are the most important to you, you will start to find ways to achieve them—and when you put them in the SMART format, you'll have a concrete plan. You'll develop the right kind of attitude you need and start to uncover any overlooked opportunities to get you closer to success.