

Setting Goals

A *goal* is something you want to achieve. A *short-term goal* is something you want to achieve soon. Examples of short-term goals are finishing your homework and doing well on tomorrow's test. A *long-term goal* is something you want to achieve at some later date. Examples of long-term goals are writing a paper and passing a class.

To set appropriate goals, you must know what is important for you to accomplish. Then you must set specific and clearly stated goals. If you do not have clearly stated goals, your effort will lack direction and focus. Write your goals to have a record of them.

THE THREE W'S OF GOALS

Each goal you set should state WHAT you will do and WHEN you will accomplish it. Implied in each goal you set is your WILL (determination) to do it. For example, a goal for a research paper might be stated as follows: *I will* (your determination) *finish gathering information for my research paper* (what you will do) *by November 20* (when you will accomplish it).

CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROPRIATE GOALS

Your goals should be:

1. ***within your skills and abilities.*** Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will help you set goals you can accomplish.
2. ***realistic.*** Setting a goal to learn the spelling of three new words a day is realistic. Trying to learn the spelling of fifty new words a day is not realistic.
3. ***flexible.*** Sometimes things will not go the way you anticipate and you may need to change your goal. Stay flexible so when you realize a change is necessary you will be ready to make the change.
4. ***measurable.*** It is important to be able to measure your progress toward a goal. It is especially important to recognize when you have accomplished your goal and need to go no further. Failure to measure your progress toward a goal and recognize its accomplishment will result in effort that is misdirected and wasted.
5. ***within your control.*** Other than when working as part of a group, accomplishment of your goal should not depend on other students. You can control what you do, but you have little or no control over what others do. You may do what you have to do, but if others don't, you will not accomplish your goal.

Many times your *parents, teachers, and counselors* will set goals for you. Be accepting when they do. These are people who know what is important for you and are very concerned with your success. They can also help you accomplish the goals they set.