

Lesson 1

Setting Goals for College Success

Materials Needed:
pen or pencil
access to Internet or library



Vocabulary: These words will help you understand this lesson.

Word/Term	Definition
academic	educational; having to do with school or scholars; especially used by colleges and universities
acronym	an abbreviation created from the parts of words or phrases; examples: CEO - chief executive officer; NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
field	in college, an area of knowledge or a branch of learning; also referred to as a <i>discipline</i> ; example: the field of 18 th century American literature
indicates	suggests or shows
goals	statements about what you intend to achieve
degree	in college, an academic title given to students who have completed a course of study; a two year course of study – associate’s degree; a four year course of study – bachelor’s degree
post-secondary	training or education for students with high school diplomas; (secondary is high school)
statistics	data or information in the form of numbers

Introduction

Research in the field of post-secondary education has uncovered a difference in college students that plays an important role in their success or failure in college. Students who set and use goals are more likely to succeed in college. On the whole, students who are goal-oriented are more likely to remain in college simply because they are able to do the work college requires. Students must pass certain courses in order to earn degrees.

Goal-oriented students tend to pass courses and get degrees because they understand how goal setting works. They can see the relationship between the big picture – graduation – and the details – college courses. They can relate what they do day by day to what they want to happen in the end. This ability to connect activities in the present with success in the future is very important for college students. It helps them have the right attitude toward the work they have to do and motivates them to do whatever needs to be done, day by day, over a long period of time.

The Nature of Goals

Did you ever want something so badly that you couldn't let go until you got it? When you want something very much, you have a goal. *Setting a goal* means you tell yourself what you want and you decide how and when you'll get it.

The thing you want, your goal, could be anything: person, place, thing, or an idea. The object of your desire could be material, like a cookie or a car. Then again, it could be something much less concrete, like someone's approval, an experience, or a routine you want to change.

Whatever it may be, you are aiming for that goal. It's like you are an arrow targeted on a bull's eye. What you do and where you go depends on whether or not it will help you get what you want. Maybe you even dream about it. You want that cookie so desperately, you can taste it. You want that car so much, you dream about driving it.



A goal may not be easy to accomplish, but it is possible to attain with effort, in time. You plan out how and when you're going to do it, who can help you, and when you'll get it done. Then you work that plan until it's done. When you have a goal, you don't stop until you know for sure you've achieved the thing you wanted, whatever it may be. The cookie is in your mouth. You have the keys to the car.

Journal Entry: Can you think of an experience in your life when you really wanted something that was attainable but not easy to get? In your journal, you are to write about the experience of having a goal and going after it, but you must write about it as a story.

- You are the main character.
- Your “story problem” is attaining your goal.
- Your “story conflicts” are obstacles in the way of achieving your goal.
- Tell how you try to attain your goal and how conflicts get in your way.
- Include how you overcome your conflicts.
- Your resolution is when everything in the story falls into place and you achieve your goal.

(Don't feel like you have to tell the absolute truth. Base your story on a goal you had, but be as creative as needed to make it into a story.)

Setting Effective Goals

Effective goal statements are powerful tools. They can focus your time, direct your energies, and motivate you to get the job done. The following strategies will help you set effective goals.

Strategy 1–Make Goals Personal

Your goals are about you, by you, and for you. Consider the advice and guidance others give you and then set your own goals.

Strategy 2—Keep Goals Positive

Goals are about positive changes you want to make in your life. Therefore, you should avoid using negative words in your goals. Negative statements make you think more about failure than success. For example, **I do not want to fail Economics** or **I will not go to the game if I do not get my homework done** are negative goal statements. They focus on what you do not want to happen. Be positive by stating what you do want to happen. **I will pass Economics** and **I will get my homework done before I go to the game** are positive goal statements because they anticipate success.

Analysis

1. Place a check mark in front of the positive goal statements.
 - a. I will read chapters 1 – 3 before I take the exam.
 - b. I won't forget to do my chores, so I won't get in trouble.
 - c. If I don't do my English paper today, I won't watch TV tonight.
 - d. I will finish my part of the history project by 3:30 p.m., Thursday afternoon.

Strategy 3—Intend to Achieve Goals

First of all, remember that goals are intentions you are determined to act upon. When you are determined to do something, you say, **I will**, not **I wish** or **I hope**. **I wish I could go to college** says what you would like, not what you will do. **I will go to college** is a more effective goal because it tells what you intend to do.

Also, if you really intend to achieve goals, avoid words that give you *wiggle* room. Wiggle room sets you up for failure. It is an excuse you can use for not getting something done. **Try** is the most famous wiggle room word. For example, look what happens when your goal is, “**I will try to finish going over my notes tonight.**” What you are actually saying is that your goal is *to try*. If you don't finish, it's OK as long as you tried. In contrast, **I will finish going over my notes tonight** is a goal that clearly states your intention to finish. When you say you will do something, trying is not enough.

2. Place a check mark in front of the intentional goal statements.
- a. _____ I wish I could be a better speller.
 - b. _____ I will check and correct written assignments for subject-verb agreement and sentence fragments.
 - c. _____ I will try to proof-read everything I write.
 - d. _____ I will get an A in Math.
 - e. _____ I hope to get an A in Math.
 - f. _____ I will try to get an A in Math.

Strategy 4–Put Goals in Writing

Writing out a goal gives you the opportunity to say just what you mean. It helps you clarify your points. In addition, writing makes your goal real; you can touch it and see it. Finally, a written goal statement can be displayed where you will see it every day as a reminder.

You can remember how to write effective goals by the acronym **SMART**. SMART goals are effective because they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. The chart that follows will help you understand more about these SMART goal qualities.

Quality		Helpful Questions to Ask Yourself
S	Specific	What will happen? When will it occur? Who is involved? What are my reasons for doing this? What do I want?
M	Measurable	How will I measure progress? How much or how many? How will I know if I have achieved my goal?
A	Attainable	Will my strengths and skills be enough? Do I need to acquire new skills or resources? Do I need information?
R	Realistic	Do I believe I can stretch enough to achieve this? What obstacles will there be?
T	Timely	By when do I need to achieve this?

3. Place a check mark in front of the SMART goals.
- a. _____ Learn as much as I can about goal setting.
 - b. _____ Do odd problems on page 23 in Geometry book by Tuesday morning.
 - c. _____ Write three goal statements using SMART guidelines tonight before 7:00 p.m.
4. Write a goal statement for something you want to accomplish within the next few months.
Check to make sure it is

- _____ Personal
- _____ Positive
- _____ Intentional

*Also check your goal statement for SMART qualities

- _____ Specific
- _____ Measurable
- _____ Attainable
- _____ Realistic
- _____ Timely

When you are satisfied that your goal is effective, write your final goal statement here.

Carrying Out Your Own Goals

Once you know what you want and have written out an effective goal statement, make plans to achieve it. To do this, you must take into account the amount of time it will take to achieve the goal. Short term goals, like the one you wrote for this lesson, are achieved by completing tasks.

Task Planning

Tasks take from several days to a few weeks to accomplish.

- Decide what tasks are needed to achieve your goal.
- Give each task a name and a due date.
- Put the due date on your calendar.

S	M	T	W	R	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Step Planning

Steps take from several hours to a few days to complete.

- Next, break tasks down into steps.
- Decide when you will do each step.
- Plan to spend some time working on your steps almost every day.
- Put them in your agenda. Think of them as appointments or dates and don't break them!

8 a.m.	English
9 a.m.	Study Hall <i>Organize Tech Report Notes</i>
10 a.m.	Math
11 a.m.	Economics <i>Team - Bring first draft presentation</i>
12 p.m.	Lunch Make appointment - guidance counselor

You may find it useful to use a chart like the one below to help with your goal achievement planning. When you have it all planned out, transfer the information to your agenda.

Goal: I will turn in 8 page Tech research paper by March 30

Tasks to accomplish goal	Steps to accomplish task	Start Dates	Due Dates
1 Research	1 Find references	3/10	3/15
	2 Take notes	3/16	3/19
	3 Organize notes	3/20	3/22
2 Write	1 Rough draft	3/23	3/23
	2 Revise	3/24	3/26
	3 Proof-read	3/27	3/27
	4 Final Copy	3/28	3/29
	5 Turn in	3/30	3/30

5. Use the table below to make a plan for achieving the goal you set for Activity 4.

Goal:

Tasks to accomplish goal		Steps to accomplish goal	Start Dates	Due Dates
1.	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
	5			
2.	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
	5			
3.	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
	5			

Parting Advice

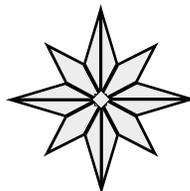
As you carry out the tasks in the goals you set, you may need to make adjustments. This is natural, especially when you are learning how to set and use goals. Keep at it, even though it may not always work perfectly. Don't get discouraged. Goal setting, like anything else, must be practiced before you get good at it.

Every time you accomplish a goal that you set for yourself, give yourself a pat on the back. Then take a bit of time to review what you did. Ask yourself if you would keep everything the same or change something the next time you have a goal like this. It always helps when you are learning something to evaluate your own performance.

Always keep the big picture in mind. Find ways to keep your goals in mind, and think about them once or twice a day. Remember why you want them. Remind yourself often why you are going to all the trouble of achieving them.

Celebrate whenever you accomplish a goal. Reward yourself for completing steps and tasks.

The most important fact is that you are learning how to be an effective goal setter. The only way to become truly effective is to keep practicing. The more you practice now, the better you will be at setting and carrying out goals when you get to college. Not only that, but as you practice setting and achieving goals now, you will increase your chances for more success in high school too.



End of Lesson 1