



It's easy to get wrapped up in the day-to-day grind of going to college and lose sight of your larger, long-term goals. Many of us have ideas such as, **"I want to be financially secure,"** or, **"I want to be happy."** While these goals are a good place to start, they don't explain how you plan to actually achieve them.

If you really want to meet a goal, you must translate your ideas into specific and concrete behaviors. The process of setting S.M.A.R.T. goals allows you to take charge of your life as a student, to recognize your accomplishments, and to appreciate your achievements.

So what are S.M.A.R.T. goals anyway?

The SMART acronym stands for the five essential pieces of a goal:
Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.

- State exactly what it is you want to achieve in concrete terms.
- **What** are you going to do?
- **Why** is it important to you?
- **How** are you going to do it?

Specific



- If you can't measure it, how do you know when you've reached your goal?
- Establish criteria for measuring goals, such as reading 20 pages in your textbook.

Measurable



- A goal needs to stretch you slightly so you feel you can do it and it will need a real commitment from you.
- A goal of losing 20 pounds in a week is not attainable, but losing 2 pounds is!
- Break it up into small pieces.

Attainable



- You must be able to actually accomplish the goal.
- Goals set too high could be discouraging; goals set too low will fail to challenge and motivate you.

Realistic



- Decide exactly when you'll start and finish your goal.
- Knowing exactly how long you have to reach your goal can be a motivating force.

Timely



S.M.A.R.T. goals aren't just another way to get you thinking about your future – it's a helpful tool in breaking up large projects and goals into smaller, manageable pieces. Not only will setting and using S.M.A.R.T. goals help you stay motivated as you see your own progress, they also help keep you from feeling overwhelmed by a huge task!