

# A Smart Guide to Goal Setting

*from the*

**AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE**

Many individuals have set goals for themselves only to see deadlines come and go, or to forget about them altogether. Deciding to make a change can be daunting when you do not know how to begin. This program uses SMART goals to guide members to successful weight management.

No matter how big or small your goal — whether it is losing 5 pounds, 50 pounds, walking a mile, or finishing your first marathon — **making changes requires planning and SMART goal setting.**

**S M A R T**

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Time-Bound

**Follow these guidelines to setting SMART goals and you will be surprised at what you can do:**

- 1. Specific:** A specific goal is your rudder in the rough seas of day-to-day life. Your goals should be clear and easy to understand. Many individuals have the common goal to “get healthy” or “increase their well-being.” These goals are too general. There are so many ways to get healthy. Specific goals will answer questions like, *How do you want to do it? Is it by losing weight? By starting to exercise? By stopping smoking?* Break it down and it will be easier to manage.
- 2. Measurable:** One of the benefits of this wonderful program are the helpers who keep track of your progress towards your SMART goal until you are able to take control and keep track of yourself. A goal to “lose weight” is not enough. How will you track your progress and how will you know when you have reached your goal? Making your goal measurable means knowing where you currently are and adding a number.

**3. Attainable:** Only you know your limits. You know how high or low you want to go. When thinking about your SMART goal, do not be too extreme. Do not have goals that are too easy, as they are not very motivating, but also do not shoot for the stars with unattainable goals that are demotivating.

- Using a common goal of “I want to lose weight,” answer the following questions:
- What percentage is attainable for you? Use the power of research! Current research suggests that a 5–10% weight loss is attainable for most overweight people. A specific, measurable, and attainable goal could be, “I will lose 7% of my body weight.”

**4. Relevant:** Members start their program at many different stages in their life. PALM’s goal is to meet people where they are in their journey by offering a variety of services to cater to their needs. This allows them to set goals that are important to where they are in their life right now. You need to set a goal that is relevant to your situation. Do not set a goal that someone else is pressuring you to attain — that isn’t very motivating.

- Examine your goal so far: “I will lose 7% of my body weight.” Does it seem relevant to you? If so, let’s keep going. If you are not concerned about weight loss or if this is not a good time in your life to focus on that, choose something that **is** motivating for you. Maybe you have a vacation in Vienna and there is a walking tour. A better, specific, measurable, and attainable goal would be, “I will walk two miles without having to rest.”

**5. Time-bound:** There is no time like the present, so another way to motivate you includes adding an end-point to your goal. This program is eight weeks long. Knowing that you have a deadline motivates you to get started. The information you learn from this program will set you up for success through the rest of your life. Losing 7% of your body weight or walking two miles may not be attainable in eight weeks, but it should be attainable in a specific amount of time. “I will lose 7% of my body weight by November 1” and “I will be able to walk two miles three weeks before my vacation this fall” are very SMART goals!

Source: Thompson, Nicole. “GOAL Setting – Create a Goal the SMART Way.” <https://www.acefitness.org/fitness-certifications/resource-center/exam-preparation-blog/3646/goal-setting-create-a-goal-the-smart-way> (retrieved September 8, 2018)