



HOW TO SET GOALS THE SMART WAY

When it comes to changing your money habits and transforming your financial future, you must set goals that can be achieved. These are called SMART goals.

HOW DO YOU CREATE SMART GOALS?

Just remember the acronym! **SMART** goals must be:

S

M

A

R

T

Specific | Measurable | Achievable | Relevant | Time-Sensitive

These five elements are the building blocks for creating achievable goals. Let's look at those elements in detail.

KEEP THEM SPECIFIC AND MEASURABLE

For goals to work, you need to focus on exactly what you want to achieve. For example, simply saying you want to be less stressed about money won't cut it. Instead, be detailed: "I would like to pay off \$24,000 of debt within one year." That goal is specific and includes an exact, measurable amount. Give yourself daily, weekly and/or monthly steps that visually help you to see progress toward your goal. For example, you would have to pay \$2,000 a month to reach that goal (or about \$460 a week).

MAKE THEM ACHIEVABLE

Goals aren't achievable unless they're written down. That includes all the steps it will take for you to get there. It's awesome to dream, and you should never stop thinking about what you can do. But to actually achieve those milestones, you have to get your goals down on paper. Writing down your goals helps you to stay on track and reach them because it creates accountability and lets you see your progress.

ENSURE RELEVANCY TO YOU

One of the easiest ways to fail at goal setting is trying to accomplish someone else's goals. If your Aunt Edna wants you to be the most successful podiatrist in the tri-state area, it won't happen unless that's your dream, too. Why? Because, as we all know, striving to win is not for the faint of heart. It's tough. And you won't have the courage to fight through if you aren't working toward your own goals. Likewise, just because your spouse or your dad wants you to get out of debt doesn't mean you will. You have to want it. The goals you set must be your goals—because when push comes to shove, you're the one who must fight to make them a reality.

SET A TIME LIMIT

Giving yourself a date for your goal gives you a target to aim at. Once you have your end point, create a plan and break it all the way down to daily activities. Then give yourself a deadline. For example: "I would like to lose 20 pounds by December 31." How many times do you need to work out each week? What will your calorie intake be each day? While preparing your strategy, it will soon become clear whether or not your goals are reachable.

Don't get discouraged if your goals aren't accomplished in the exact way you originally planned or if you get off track. Bumps will occur and life will happen. That's okay! As long as you focus on your goal and are taking small steps toward achieving it, you are on your way to making a big change—because big change starts small.