



Start vague, test it with five prompts, rewrite it as one sentence, then add a first step, an obstacle plan and check-in dates.

01 Start with the vague version

Write the goal the way it sounds in your head, even if it is fuzzy. For example: 'Get fitter', 'Save more', 'Learn Spanish'.

My vague goal:

How much do I want this, honestly?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not very much

A lot

02 S and M: specific and measurable

Specific means you could point at it. Measurable means you would know when you had done it. 'Get fitter' becomes 'Walk briskly for 30 minutes, three times a week'. 'Save more' becomes 'Put £100 a month into a separate account'.

Specific: what exactly will I do or have? Where, and with whom, if that matters?

Measurable: how will I count it, so I can see progress? (a number, a tick, a date)

03 A and R: achievable and relevant

These two letters change most between versions. Some versions say 'assignable' (who will do it) or 'realistic'. Others say 'achievable' and 'relevant'. Here, achievable asks whether it fits your actual week and means. Relevant asks whether it matters to you, not to someone else.

Achievable: what do I have to make this work (time, money, skills, help)? What is missing?

Relevant: why does this matter to me now? What does it connect to in my life?

How realistic does this feel, as it stands?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Too big or too vague

Stretching but doable

04 T: time-bound, then rewrite it as one sentence

Give it a real date, not 'soon'. Then put it all together.

Template: 'By [date], I will [specific action], measured by [how I will count it], because [why it matters].'

Time-bound: the date I will finish, or review it:

My goal, rewritten as one sentence:

05 First step and obstacle plan

A clear goal still needs a first move. Make it small enough that you could do it in the next two days. Then name what is most likely to get in the way, and decide what you will do when it does.

My first step (small, specific):

I will do it on (date and time):

The obstacle most likely to get in the way, and my plan: 'If [it happens], then I will [response].'

06 Check-in dates

Pick the dates now, while you are clear. At each one, look at your measure and ask what is working, what is not, and whether the goal still fits. Changing a goal is allowed. It is not failing.

Check-in date	Where I am against my measure	What I will change or keep
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

07 Does my rewritten goal pass?

Read your one-sentence goal back and tick what is true.

- ☐ Someone else could tell whether I had done it.
- ☐ It has a number, a tick or a date I can check.
- ☐ It fits my real week, not my best possible week.
- ☐ I want it, rather than feeling I should.
- ☐ It has a date.
- ☐ I know my first step and when I will take it.
- ☐ I have planned for the most likely obstacle.

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Did the goal change when you made it specific? What does that tell you about what you really want?
- Is there a number or date in your goal that you chose to feel impressive rather than to be useful?
- What is the first thing likely to knock this off course, and is your plan for it honest?
- If you reached this goal, what would you do next?
- Does this goal rely on something you cannot control, like another person's decision? Could you set a version that is in your hands?

Free worksheet from selfgrowth.org. Free self-growth worksheets for real life. Fill it in online and it saves as you go: selfgrowth.org/worksheets/smart-goals-worksheet



If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at findahelpline.com. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.