

Setting goals

Why set goals?

Setting goals gets better outcomes.

1. **Focus:** goals focus attention and direct efforts to goal-related activities.
2. **Effort:** goals increase effort; we work more effectively with a goal than without.
3. **Persistence:** goals get people through setbacks.
4. **Cognition:** goals help people understand why they're doing something and can change their behaviour.

Both **short and longer term goals are the best way to give yourself direction**, whether you're in Year 9 or doing VCE. Long-term goals can be general—"to do the best I can", or more specific—"I want to do medicine and work for Médecins sans Frontières."

Shorter term goals can involve timeframes from a day, a week, a month or a term.

Learning to set and achieve shorter term goals is the key to achieving longer term goals.

How to set goals

The SMART technique is popular and easy to remember and to use.

Specific

A specific goal is clear and unambiguous, and always more achievable than a general goal.

A general goal might be to improve your study skills. That's a platitude, an empty statement.

A specific study skill goal knows exactly what it wants to improve: to concentrate better, or have a better memory, or procrastinate less.

A specific goal establishes the five Ws:

- **What** do I want to accomplish?
- **Why?** What purpose or benefit is there in accomplishing this goal?
- **Who** is involved? Is it just me or me and others?
- **Where** will this happen? At school, at home, at my desk?
- **Which** things do I need to get this done?



NOSSAL WELLBEING NOTES

Measurable



If a goal isn't measurable, it's not possible to know if progress is being made. **Measuring progress keeps you on track**, and meeting targets along the way encourages the continued effort needed to reach the ultimate goal.

Measuring progress around completing a task, like getting a big assignment done, is easy. It's about breaking the task into smaller

components and matching them with a timeframe.

Measuring an improvement in something like your concentration is not so easy. Judgments about the progress you're making are far more subjective. You might need to **keep a daily journal** and record how well you concentrated in class or studying at home each day.

You could make a scorecard and score your concentration by the period or study session, average the scores over a week, then check for improvement week by week.

Achievable or attainable

A goal must be achievable. Doing something five or ten per cent better is realistic, but 150% is not. A goal that's too low is meaningless.

A person with an important identified goal works to develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and capacity to reach it.

Realistic or relevant

The goal has to matter. A bank manager's goal to make 50 peanut butter sandwiches by 2:00pm is specific, measurable, attainable, and time-bound, but hardly relevant.

A relevant goal motivates you. A relevant goal seems worthwhile, now seems like the right time to pursue it, and it matches other important things you're doing or working toward.

Time-targeted

Put simply: **any goal needs a deadline, a timeframe, a target date.** A commitment to a deadline focuses efforts to reach the goal on or before the due date. It helps prevent goals being eaten up by day-to-day stuff, setbacks and small crises. It should create a sense of urgency, but not panic.

