How to Write SMART Goals

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.” — Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

What is a goal?

A GOAL is...Deciding what you want to do and learn in a 4-H project. It’s like a road map. It helps you get where you want to go.

SMART Goals — Goals that have criteria that correspond to each of the following categories: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

• **Specific:** Clearly defined or outlined. What exactly do I want to accomplish/achieve?
• **Measurable:** Able to be measured, how will I know when I’ve accomplished it?
• **Attainable:** Achievable. Can I accomplish this goal?
• **Relevant:** Is this goal relevant to your project or organization in some way?
• **Time-bound:** Set to a specific date.

What makes a strong goal?

• A good goal can be measured or checked and has three parts:
  1. **Action**—how you will do something
  2. **Result(s)**—what you are going to do
  3. **Timetable**—when you are going to do it

See the table below for examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Want</th>
<th>ACTION: to learn</th>
<th>RESULT: how to cook two different items for dinner</th>
<th>TIMETABLE: by New Year’s Eve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Want</td>
<td>ACTION: to give</td>
<td>RESULT: two demonstrations for my project club</td>
<td>TIMETABLE: by August 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Want</td>
<td>ACTION: to train</td>
<td>RESULT: my dog to sit and stay</td>
<td>TIMETABLE: before the county fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Goals should pass the “control test”

If you are not sure that you can accomplish your goal easily, you can conduct a “control test” for that goal. Do you have control over what you want to do? Does the action part of your goal tell what you will do? You have control over a goal such as, “I will learn to identify 10 types of trees and shrubs on my family’s property this spring.” However, if the action mentioned in the goal is what someone else will do, it does not pass the control test. The goal statement, “I will win first place in the halter class at the district 4-H horse show,” does not pass the control test because the judge provides the action that decides who will win first place in the halter class at the district 4-H horse show. Do your goals pass the control test?

• Goals should be appropriate for the age and experience level of the 4-H member

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Examples:*****************************************************************************

I want to train my dog.

This goal is vague. What are you training it to do? How do you know you’ve accomplished your goal? When do you want to accomplish this by?

Instead, you might say:

I want to train my dog to sit on command by the January project meeting.

I want to learn to make strawberry jam.

This goal is specific, achievable, and passes the “control test,” but it’s not measurable or timebound.

Instead, you might say:

I want to make 2 jars of strawberry jam by county fair.

I want to win grand champion in rabbit showmanship at county fair

This goal does not pass the “control test.” It’s not in the members power whether or not they accomplish this goal, it’s in the judges.

I want to swim the 50 freestyle in less than 30 seconds by June 1st.

This has everything a SMART goal should have except is it relevant to the 4-H project?