

Realistic Goal Setting

Middle and early high school students can sometimes struggle to understand how to set a realistic and measurable goal. This series of activities can help them see the details that need to go into *actually* reaching a goal. Begin the unit by asking students to reflect on goals and their own experiences with them. Then share part 2 with them and teach them the details about how to set and work toward goals. Finally, give them part 3 to fill out, and spend the next few weeks working toward their goals and reflecting on them along the way. Students can easily complete this work without using the worksheets, so feel free to take the content here and adapt it to make it more interactive or customized to your context.

Part 1: Reflecting

This is the first activity in a series of three to teach students about goal setting. Use this activity to encourage students to reflect on past goal-setting efforts and break down the factors that contribute to the success of reaching goals.

Name: _____

1. What is a goal?
2. Have you ever set a goal? What was it? Did you reach it?

3. What steps do you need to take to reach a goal?
4. In general, what things help you reach a goal?
5. Of those things you listed, which one are you best at?
6. In general, what things can get in the way of you reaching a goal?
7. Of those things you listed, what is the one you struggle with the most? What might help you overcome that struggle?

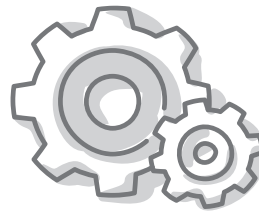
Part 2: Teaching the Steps to Actually Reach a Goal

This document is a guide and teaching tool as you help your students unpack and explore what a good goal is and how to reach it. Review the bullet points with students and give them concrete examples from your own life or student examples they can relate to.

Step 1: Set a goal.

What makes a good goal?

- It's specific. Don't say, "I'll be a better student." Say, "I will turn in my homework at least three times a week."
- It will challenge you but not so much that you give up because it's too hard.
- It is realistic for you. You have the skills or can gain the skills. You also have the time to do what you need to do to reach it.
- You want to accomplish the goal. It's not something you just think you should do.
- It has a deadline, and you can measure it.
- It has some flexibility. If what you set out to do isn't going to work, you can change it a little bit so it will work.



Step 2: Create a plan and reflect on it.

How do you stay on track with reaching your goal?

- Create a plan—think about the specific steps you need to take to achieve your goal.
- Reflect!
- Look at your plan and ask yourself, "Am I taking the steps I need to take?"



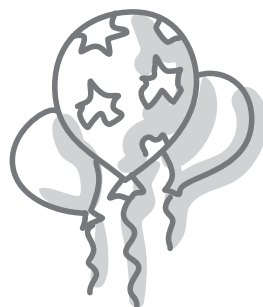
- Ask yourself, “Is what I’m doing helping me reach my goal, or do I need to change what I’m doing?”
- Ask yourself, “Do I need to learn how to do something more to help me reach my goal?”
- Ask yourself, “Do I need help from someone?”
- Forgive yourself—if you mess up and do something that gets in the way of reaching your goal, forgive yourself and start working toward it again.
- If you run into obstacles, come up with a solution to keep working toward your goal—it might mean you have to change your original plan.



Step 3: Celebrate achieving your goal.

How do you know when you reach your goal, and what do you do when you get there?

- Your goal should be specific enough that you know exactly when you reach it.
- When you complete each step in your goal plan, you should notice that and congratulate yourself.
- You should feel good about achieving each step and moving forward even when you run into obstacles.
- When you achieve your goal, celebrate! Feel good about what you’ve done and share it with someone.



Part 3: Creating a Goal Plan

In this third part of the series on goal setting, give students examples from your own life and from what you know about the students as they think through each step in the following goal-planning worksheet (especially the steps, strengths, and resources questions).

Name: _____ Date: _____

What is your goal?

(Be specific. Challenge yourself. Be realistic.)

Make sure your goal includes all of these:

- ☐ Is it specific?
- ☐ Is there a deadline?
- ☐ Is it realistic?

Also consider the following questions:

- ☐ Does it start slow?
- ☐ Does it use your strengths?
- ☐ Do you know how to get everything you need to reach it?

**Now write a basic outline in the space provided. What steps do you need to take to reach your goal?
(What do you need to do and in what order?)**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Now let's brainstorm about other resources you already have or need to gather to help you.

1. What strengths do you have that can help you do work toward and reach your goal?
2. What resources and support do you need to meet your goal? (What do you need to know or learn? Who might you need help from? Do you need any supplies?)
3. How will you know you've met your goal? (What will it look like? How will you feel?)

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