

How Can I Set and Reach My Goals?

Successful students frequently mention setting goals when they're asked how they do so well in college. However, reaching their goals doesn't just happen. These students make plans to accomplish their goals.

I'M IN SCHOOL, AND I DON'T HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER MY LIFE!

You may feel that your life is controlled by campus policies, by curriculum guides, and by course schedules. However, it is possible to achieve control over your life.

DO I NEED TO BUY ONE OF THOSE EXPENSIVE PLANNERS OR A PDA?

No. You don't need an expensive, leather-bound planner or a PDA. **But you do need to write down your goals.** Seeing your goals helps you set realistic plans. If you don't have a planner, write your goals on a calendar or notebook.

WHEN AND HOW CAN I WRITE DOWN MY GOALS?

Anytime is a good time to write down your goals, but it's especially important to establish some goals at the beginning of the academic year and at the start of each semester at midterm, and before finals.

Some students find it helpful to discuss their goals with important people in their lives, including campus mentors, friends, and family. Whomever you go to should be a good listener. Discussing your goals will help you sort out what's really important to you.

During these discussions, you may hear lots of advice. Listen to this advice, but your goals are just that—*your* goals. You need to decide for yourself what is important.



Set aside time to write down your goals. Be creative during this process. List everything without worrying if your goals are worthy ones. If you like, use several sheets of paper, and label one "School," another "Personal," and perhaps another sheet "Career."

These headings are just suggestions. You could write just one list and then sort out your goals into appropriate headings. You could also use the headings "Now" and "Later" to separate goals that require immediate attention from future goals.

Next, decide which goals are crucial, and transfer these goals to a new sheet of paper. Then, think about what you need to do to accomplish your revised list of goals. You may need to read up on a topic, make an appointment to see someone, or take a class.

Sometimes it's helpful to break a larger goal into some mini-steps that you need to do on a weekly and monthly basis. If you have a planner, write down these mini-goals on the appropriate weeks.

WON'T I FORGET MY GOALS ONCE I REALLY GET BUSY WITH MY STUDIES?

Post your goal list where you will be reminded of your plans. On the wall next to your desk or on your refrigerator are two good places for your list.

WHAT IF MY PLANS CHANGE?

Set aside time each month to take stock of how much you have accomplished towards meeting your goals. Don't be too hard on yourself if you have gotten sidetracked. Sometimes your plans change because your perspective changes. Adjust your plans to reflect your new outlook.