

SMARTer Goals for New Year's

It's 2025, and the New Year is here! Have you decided on a resolution? Every New Year's Eve, millions of Americans reflect on the past year and resolve to improve their lives. Whether that includes getting healthier, becoming more financially stable, or striving for a work-life balance, these resolutions often don't go any further than thoughts in our minds.

Have you ever set a New Year's resolution, such as, "I want to spend less time on my phone," or "I want to be more active," but struggle to follow through? One reason could be that the resolution needs to be specific to achieve.

Improving your life requires planning. Whether your goals are personal or professional, you are more likely to achieve them if you make them SMART. The letters in the acronym S.M.A.R.T. stand for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.

- **Specific** goals mean setting goals that work with your lifestyle, not against it. It's easier to achieve well-defined goals that describe what you will do and are not too general. An example of this could be "I will eat out no more than twice per week." This is opposed to a general goal like eating healthy.
- **Measurable** means using data or criteria to help you measure or evaluate progress and know if you've reached the goals. An example of this could be drinking 64 ounces of water daily, eating fruits and vegetables for 2 meals/day, or getting in cardio exercise four times each week.
- **Achievable** means setting goals that work for your lifestyle and not against them. Make sure you have the time and resources you need. You should feel challenged by your goals but also know they can be achieved. If you are currently only drinking two glasses of water a day, a more achievable goal would be to drink 4 glasses per day rather than aiming for 8 cups or 64 ounces.
- **Realistic** goals are relevant to your overall life goals and priorities. Make sure the goals are achievable and sustainable. Is eating more healthy and becoming more physically active realistic with your finances, time, and lifestyle or priorities?
- **Time-bound** refers to the timeline in which you plan on achieving the goal or results. Set a start date, frequency, and deadline. Some examples of smart goals may look like:
 - Starting tonight, get 7-8 hours of sleep every night and track my progress every morning.
 - Starting next week, eat half of my plate as fruits and vegetables for 2 meals a day.

Healthy habits don't happen overnight. Sticking to your goals is not always easy. Here are a few additional tips to keep you on track to reach your goals.

- Put your goals in writing to increase your commitment.
- Bigger goals can seem overwhelming, so set smaller goals to get to the bigger goal.

- Post your goal where you will see it often.
- Share your goals with friends and family or an accountability partner.
- Evaluate your progress. Periodically, take a moment to assess your goals. Are you on target? Does the goal need to be modified?
- Once you achieve your goals, set new ones.

Consider why you set your goals and how achieving them will positively impact your health and well-being. It's time to stop making excuses and start taking action. Now is the time to start.

SMART goals are the first step to reaching your goals in the new year. Be persistent, be realistic, and don't give up. Best wishes for meeting your goals, and Happy New Year!