



Let's take a look at another goal most of us can identify with!

*"I want to (or I plan to) lose weight."*

Is that a mission/vision statement or a SMARTER goal? You're right: it's a mission/vision statement. It doesn't give us details about the how and when and how much.

What would make this a SMARTER goal? How about something like:

*"I will change my diet and walk one hour 5 days/week to lose 5 pounds per month in order to lose a total of 25 pounds by December."*

- |           |                          |   |
|-----------|--------------------------|---|
| It is     | <b>S</b> pecific:        | It's about losing weight through diet and exercise  |
| It is     | <b>M</b> easurable:      | I can weigh myself every month to see if I've lost at least 5pounds   |
| It is     | <b>A</b> ction-oriented: | I have to reduce calorie intake and exercise  |
| It is     | <b>R</b> easonable:      | At this time I have the flexibility in my schedule to walk 5 days/week, and I can maintain a balanced diet that stays within 2,000 calories/day, without feeling hungry; I can substitute water for soda. |
| It is     | <b>T</b> ime-bound:      | 5 pounds lost <u>every month</u> until December.  |
| It can be | <b>E</b> valuated:       | How about that – I'm actually losing 8 pounds a month!  |
| It can be | <b>R</b> evised:         | I will lose 25 pounds by November instead of December. (Those skinny jeans are calling me...)   |

**Key Point:**

All SMARTER goals must begin with the words "I will..." Or "I'm going to..."

A SMARTER goal never begins with "I plan to..." "I want to..." "I dream of..." "I will try to..." "I will attempt..." "I expect to..." "I would like to..." "I hope to..."

These reflect personal mission/vision statements, not solid goals.

Another thought: Avoid using qualifiers such as “If it’s possible...” or “If it’s realistic...” or “Perhaps...” or “I will try to....”

A SMARTER goal is bold and definitive!

Goals can be developed for **what a person wants in their life**, for example:

*“By March of this year, I will be living in a home of my choosing, operated by XYZ, Inc.”*

Check it out – does this seem like a SMARTER goal to you? We think so. Are more specifics needed? Yes. And that’s where SMARTER objectives come into play. More on that in a moment.

Goals can also be developed for **things the focus person may NOT want**, or things that if eliminated would benefit the person’s life.

Here’s an example of someone who exhibits frustrated behavior because they can’t communicate with people out in public – and we agree it would be good to reduce or eliminate behaviors that upset others.

*“For the next 8 months starting in May of this year, I will use an augmentative communication device at least 3 hours every day, which will allow me to communicate more with others outside my family and professional circle, and therefore reduce my frustration.”*

What do you think? Is this a SMARTER goal? It appears to meet all the criteria.

Key Point: Some goals are easily measured because they either happened or they didn’t! It’s common sense: I either took the GRE for graduate school – or I didn’t. I either moved into an apartment closer to my job – or I didn’t. I either got into my skinny jeans – or I didn’t.

SMARTER goals, because of the 7 criteria (S.M.A.R.T.E.R.), include more details that can be measured!

Key Point:  
As you see, because of the Action-oriented criterion, SMARTER goals suggest objectives or actions, or steps to take. **When or if you write objectives, they too must be SMARTER.**

Consider the example above about the augmentative communication device. A SMARTER objective (action, step) might be:

*“For the next 4 months I will participate in training on the Speech! Speech! augmentative communication device 5 days a week in my [day habilitation program], for at least 1 hour a day.”*

Food for Thought:

**Which do you think makes a goal more “person-centered”?** “I will receive training in how to use a smart phone.” OR “I will participate in training to learn how to use a smart phone.”

We think the latter is much more person-centered. “Participate” suggests the focus person will DO something; they will be responsible for taking action. “Receive” implies passivity. Something will be done TO the person. Such subtle wording has a powerful impact on our role; it distinguishes us as supporters, more than service providers.

Another thing to consider: the phrase “*will have access to...*” sure sounds like we are the gate-keepers. Better to say “*will visit, obtain, use, experience...*”

Can you sense a subtle difference?

Key to developing/writing each SMARTER goal and objective is the verb we put after the words “So-and-so (or I) will.....” Following is a list of strong verbs you may want to incorporate into your goal and objective statements. You can probably think of many others!

“I will.....”

- Use
- Communicate (what, how, when, to whom?)
- Request/ask for (assistance, information, revisions in goals & services)
- Select/Choose
- Explore/Experience (ex.places, resources, experiences)
- Identify (ex places, people, resources, experiences)
- Work in/at
- Volunteer with/in
- Apply (to, for)
- Complete
- Live (where)
- Participate in (activity, event, training/education, etc)
- Socialize with
- Visit/Tour/Explore (what? Where? In what way? why?)

- Visit with (who? where?)
- Learn how to
- Take (ex. classes, lessons, injections, medications)
- Obtain/acquire (ex. drivers license, a room-mate)
- Find/locate (a person, a place, an object)
- Pay/pay for
- Shop for
- Buy/purchase
- Make (ex. a meal, an appointment, a model airplane)
- Write; Create, Paint; Build; Assemble Cook; Repair; Maintain; Organize; Clean; Decorate; Take apart;
- Travel to and from (place x and place z; How? When?)
- Drive (what vehicle, where, why?)
- Join (a club, a recreation facility; an interest group)
- Take (a vacation, a trip, medications)
- Follow directions (to a place, for a task)
- Build stamina (for what, how?)
- Maintain my health (physical, mental, dental) by
- Eliminate/Reduce/change (a behavior, an activity)
- Exchange (one behavior for another; activity; item)
- Plan (a menu, a trip, an activity, a strategy)
- Demonstrate/show
- Invite (who? for what? How?)
- Celebrate (an achievement, a special event)
- Collaborate/work with (who? to do/accomplish what?)
- Develop/Review/Revise (ex. personal goals)

Again, this list is by no means exhaustive; you may well come up with other verbs you could use. Just be sure they are person-centered, active verbs – where we can observe the focus person in action. Keep in mind: active versus passive.

**Quick Hint:**

Use the word “Use” instead of “Utilize” – it’s less pretentious and means the same thing! Oh, and avoid “Prioritize“ --” it may be ok for Scrabble, but it’s clunky. Compare these two goal phrases: “Rafael will prioritize his work tasks.” “Rafael will identify his work tasks, in order of importance.”

**FAQ:**

**Is it acceptable to say “So-and-So will *be able to* [do something].”?**

There’s nothing wrong with the phrase **will be able**

**to** – but is it really necessary? Consider:

*“Susanna will be able to invite a group of her friends over to her house for dinner.”* compared with:

*“Susanna will invite a group of her friends over to her house for dinner.”*

Another example. Compare:

*“Byron will be able to extinguish his habit of hitting people when he is feeling stress.”*

*“For two hours every day, Byron will engage in activities he enjoys.”*

**Will be able to....** is actually sort of redundant.  
And it takes up space!

Remember, in each focus person’s ELP you may be writing SMARTER goals and objectives under one, several, or perhaps all of the following Key Life Areas, depending on the needs identified during the assessment phase.

- Residence and Daily Living
- Career/Employment
- Further Education/Training
- Health, Well-Being and Personal Care
- Community Participation/Contribution
- Leisure Pursuits/Avocations
- Relationships/Social Interactions
- Transportation
- Financial, benefits management, &Legal Issues
- Physical Safety/Security/Behavioral Issues

Food for Thought:

Ideally each goal and objective should convey the wishes of the individual. What **THEY** want versus what the agency can provide. The focus person’s goals become the **CENTERPIECE** of the plan!

Because they are written using the SMARTER criteria, it will be relatively easy and straightforward to review them frequently – and to update or revise as needed.

Using the SMARTER approach, you will be addressing the specific needs of individual service recipients. This helps you (1) avoid the trap of developing generic cookie-cutter-type goals and objectives; (2) handle what may seem like “unrealistic” goals – because the goals must – according to

the SMARTER criteria – be measurable and reasonable; and most of all, (3) identify the actions, services, resources, and interventions the focus person may need from us – in order to meet those goals!

**Quick Hint:**

If the focus person is unable to tell you what their dreams are, then you may want to identify a SMARTER goal that reflects the intent to assist the person to learn about their world and their community. The entry in the ELP might look something like this:

“While John is not able to tell us what his Goals & Objectives are, he has shown an interest in music. John will hear one concert a month in different venues.”

“Between January and April, John will go on a minimum of 8 informational interviews to places of business that relate to the music field.”

**Reminder:**

Goals can be written for things the focus person wants or does not want in his/her life. They can be written for supports that will be needed in order to help the focus person achieve what he/she wants or does not want.