

# S.M.A.R.T. Objectives

## **Specific: Objectives need to be specific.**

Objectives are often too vague, for example, "I will work hard". A specific objective focuses on precise details, for example, "I will thoroughly document my work and communicate my progress in weekly team meetings."

## **Measurable: Objectives need to be measurable.**

Having measurable objectives means aiming for quantifiable, concrete results, for example, "I will produce three interim reports and one final report during my work term." Committing to a number makes it easier to evaluate whether the objective has been met.

## **Achievable: Objectives need to be reasonable and achievable.**

At the outset, many students have huge ambitions, and forget to allow for the limits on their time and resources. The difference between success and failure often comes down to setting goals that are actually attainable. "I am going to revamp the entire SAP system by the end of the work term" is a good example of an unreachable goal.

## **Realistic: Objectives need to be realistic.**

Having dreams is important, but you need to temper them with reality. Be wary of objectives such as, "I will overcome my fear of public speaking during this CO-OP work term." Although that's an admirable goal, you might more realistically plan to give one presentation to build your confidence.

## **Time-sensitive: Objectives need to be attached to a date and time.**

A due date creates a sense of urgency, which motivates you to take action, thereby increasing the likelihood you will meet your objective. Having a detailed action plan also lets you monitor your progress.

### **SMART OBJECTIVES ARE...**

- S**PECIFIC If an objective is precise then there is only one way in which it can be interpreted.  
In other words, can the success or otherwise of achieving the objective be measured as we proceed?
- M**EASURABLE This is not always easy to achieve as sometimes we have to wait to the end to be able to measure.  
This means acceptable to the organization, the people that have to do it or society in general.
- A**CCEPTABLE Of course, this would include illegal acts or anything that is morally or ethically unacceptable.  
In other words is it possible to do it. Of course, you need to know the subject and the problems well to make this judgment and this is why so many senior management objectives fail.
- R**EALISTIC It used to be thought that you should set objectives at slightly higher levels than you actually require. The idea was that people would extend themselves further.  
This is now considered wrong because people do not try so hard if they think an objective is not realistic.  
When are you going to achieve it and when will you start?
- T**IME RELATED They say that road to heaven is paved with good intentions. Without a time definition the objective lacks commitment.