

SMART Goals

The five criteria that separate a mood from a unit of work.

A goal written in SMART form generates usable data about whether you are making progress. A goal written vaguely generates only feelings about whether you are. Both matter — but only one of them is testable.

S SPECIFIC

Name exactly what you will do. Avoid verbs that could mean anything (“engage,” “explore,” “work on”). Use verbs that have a witness (“schedule,” “publish,” “complete”).

M MEASURABLE

Include a number. How many calls, which companies, how many words. Without a number, you can't know whether you finished.

A ACHIEVABLE

Reachable from where you are right now. Ambitious is fine; impossible is demoralizing. Ask: could this week's effort plausibly produce this outcome?

R RELEVANT

Connected to the thing you are actually trying to do. A well-executed goal for the wrong target is wasted motion.

T TIME-BOUND

A deadline. Without one, the goal never completes — it just migrates to next week's list in perpetuity.

BEFORE / AFTER

VAGUE

“Network more.”

A mood. Cannot be completed, cannot generate evidence.

SMART

“Schedule and attend 3 virtual coffee chats with former colleagues by January 30th.”

Specific action, measurable quantity, achievable window, job-search relevant, time-bound.

MORE JOB-SEARCH EXAMPLES

“Get better at interviewing.” →

“Complete 2 mock interviews with a peer and log 5 STAR stories by Feb 15.”

“Fix my LinkedIn.” →

“Rewrite headline and About section; publish 1 post by end of week.”

“Apply to more jobs.” →

“Submit 8 tailored applications to in-scope roles by Friday EOD.”

The SMART Goals framework is attributed to George T. Doran, “There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives,” *Management Review*, November 1981. Common-knowledge framework; no license restrictions.