

E-PME  *Enlisted*
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Writing Goals 3.A.02

Learning Objective(s): DEMONSTRATE the proper way to write goals.

Why You Need to Know This

Your personal success and effectiveness in the Coast Guard will depend on your ability to identify and achieve your personal and professional goals. Goals are like nautical charts; they help get you from one point to another. Goals provide the direction you need to reach your destination, the motivation to sustain you on your trip, and a way to measure your progress. Goal setting is an organized planning process, and a reliable method for identifying what you want to achieve.

This chapter will help you understand the difference between short-term goals and long-term goals, as well as, provide you with a useful model to help you write, review and update your goals over time.

Topics Covered

This section will cover the following topics:

- Goals (Short & Long-Term) Defined
- Action Plans Defined
- SMART Model
- **S** - Specific
- **M** - Measurable
- **A** - Attainable
- **R** - Realistic
- **T** - Timely

At the end of this lesson you will be required to participate in a learning activity. You are encouraged to first review the learning activity and the sign off requirements located in the “**You and Your Supervisor**” section of this lesson. Reviewing this information before you begin the lesson will allow you to take proper notes and focus on key learning points.

Goals Defined

A goal is defined as a statement of intent or desired result in which individual or group effort is directed. Goals are divided into two types, “short term” and “long term”. The difference between short term and long term goals is the amount of time and effort required to achieve the desired outcome.

Generally speaking, short term goals involve shorter periods of time and serve in support of long term goals which are usually more complex and challenging. For example, your long term goal may be to buy a car, while your short term goal may be to save money for a down payment or to purchase the car outright. How you define your short-term goal will be determined by many factors. Long term goals keep us focused on where we are headed while short term goals provide waypoints along the way.

Action Plans Defined

Both, short term and long term goals, require an **action plan**. An action plan outlines the steps necessary to accomplish a goal. An example of an action plan used within the Coast Guard is the Individual Development Plan (IDP).

An IDP is a valuable performance enhancement, career and whole person development tool. It is a personally tailored action plan that an individual can use to identify short and long-term personal and career goals. It outlines the training and developmental experiences required to achieve those goals, for the benefit of the individual, unit and Coast Guard.

S.M.A.R.T.

Setting goals is more than deciding what you want to do. It involves figuring out what you need to do to get where you want to go, and how long it will take you to get there. Many people do not accomplish their goals because they do not know the right way of setting goals. The most effective way of formulating your goals is to use the **SMART** method. **SMART** is an acronym, standing for goals that are:

- Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Relevant
 - Time-Bound
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S – Specific

Your goal(s) must be **S**pecific and well defined. They must be clear and unambiguous. You should start off asking yourself the six “W’s”. Not all “W’s” have to be answered but the more the better:

- **What:** What do you want to accomplish
- **Why:** Specific reason, purpose or benefits of accomplishing this goal
- **Who:** Who will be involved
- **Where:** Identify a location
- **When:** Establish a time frame
- **Which:** Identify requirements or constraints

Example of a specific goal:

- **What:** Compete on the May Service Wide Exam for Second Class Petty Officer in the Coast Guard
- **Why:** Enhance Coast Guard career by increasing job skills, responsibility and pay
- **Who:** Myself, my supervisor, members required to sign off requirements, mentor, Second Class Petty Officer and above who I ask advice from. ESO/Training Officer
- **Where:** Home and Unit
- **When:** Six months from the day I advance to E-4
- **Which:** Complete all advancement requirements outlined in the Personal Manual COMDT INST M1000.6 (Series)

M – Measurable

The next step requires establishing concrete criteria for **M**easuring progress towards attaining your goal. In other words, determining where you are in relation to where you want to be. How will you know when you have met your goal? This will keep you on track and help you realize when you might have fallen behind. The following example is based on the goal listed above:

In order to participate in the May Service Wide Exam (SWE) I will need to complete the following activities by February 1st:

- Request/Read/Study all Non-Resident Course material (Rate-related & EPME) by 1 Aug
 - Complete 25 required EPQ’s by 15 Sept
 - Complete all 50 required EPQs by 1 Nov
 - Take the End of Course Test (EOCT) and EMPE Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE) by 2 Nov. If I fail either one this will give me enough time to retest every 21 days until I pass.
 - Meet Time-In-Grade (TIG) requirements
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A – Attainable

Another important component of goal setting is making sure your goal is **A**ttainable. In order to be successful your goals must be achievable. The best goals should challenge you, but should not be impossible to achieve. Accomplishing your goals will require the following attributes:

- **Attitude** – How committed/motivated are you to the effort and sacrifices required to achieve your goal?
- **Ability** – Do you possess the aptitude and capacity needed to accomplish the task before you?
- **Skill** - What talent or expertise will be needed to ensure your success?
- **Financial Resources** - Is your goal feasible? Do you have the financial means to achieve your desired outcome?

Example: Right now I am committed to do what it takes to complete my goal. I have completed all unit check in requirements, I am a qualified watch stander, and I want to advance to Second Class Petty Officer. After reviewing all the Performance Objectives I am confident I can complete this long term goal.

R – Relevant

Next, you need to ask yourself if your goal is **R**elevant to your life, your priorities and/or those of the organization you serve. Just because a goal may be possible doesn't necessarily mean it's practical. Expending time, energy, and money on a goal that will not serve you in the long run does not make sense; furthermore, it does not make sense to take on goals created by other people if they are not in alignment with your **own** goals and aspirations.

Example: This goal of becoming a Second Class Petty Officer is relevant to the job I am currently doing, and I am ready for the next level of responsibility that comes with this position.

T – Time Bound

Finally, you need to develop a specific **T**ime frame to achieve your goals. Having a specific time frame will give you the impetus to get started. Your time frame needs to be reasonable, and they must take into account factors that may be outside of your control. It also should include interim steps, along with a plan, to monitor your progress. Your time frame should cover both short and long term goals.

Example: I need to complete all my short term goals listed in order to meet my long term goal of Competing for the May SWE. All short term goals and mandated requirements must be completed by 1 Feb.

Learning Activity



To successfully complete this requirement you will need to demonstrate proper goal writing skills by performing the following activity:

- Meet with your supervisor and develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) IAW COMDTINST 5357.1A

Note: If you already have an IDP, review/update your goals using the **SMART** method.

For You and Your Supervisor

In order to meet the sign-off requirements for this lesson **YOU** must perform the following:

1. Think about what you need to learn for your current position and what you want to do next in your career. Set goals and objectives applicable to your unit, the Coast Guard and yourself. Research ways of meeting your career aspirations and enhancing your performance.
2. Draft (or update) the IDP with input from your supervisor and mentors. For first-termers, your immediate supervisor will assist in drafting the first IDP based on your input. Use the information found in the SMART method to help you formulate and organize your plan.
3. After finalizing the IDP, begin working on the agreed-to activities. Notify your supervisor of progress and any changed circumstances and keep in touch with your mentors.
4. Submit either your initial or newly revised IDP to your supervisor for review.

Before signing off on this requirement your **SUPERVISOR** must:

1. Be familiar with the IDP process and purpose.
 2. Act as a coach and/or mentor to help the subordinate reflect on their potential, help set goals and explore career options; review and discuss the person's strengths and areas for improvement in the current work assignment; help identify and prioritize specific activities to address any gaps in competencies. When the individual drafts the IDP, check to ensure it is realistic and achievable.
 3. Once the IDP is finalized, be available with timely feedback and pinpoint areas where the individual could take greater responsibility. Identify resources to support the IDP opportunities can take many forms, so include a mix of training and experiential learning in the IDP. Besides classroom training, IDPs might incorporate shadowing of senior individuals, mentoring, distance learning, self study, assignment to a project team, cross-training for exposure to new areas, and/or temporary assignments.
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References

The references used to develop this lesson can be found at CG Directives (CG-612), www.uscg.mil/directives:

- Individual Development Plan, COMDTINST 5357.1A(series)
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