

Goals and motivation

Goals

Goals are very closely linked to motivation, so both long- and short-term goals help keep you moving through your different types of study in preference to other activities (which might be more enjoyable and therefore equally or more motivating).

Goals give you the direction and motivation gives you the energy so use the combination.

Decide on your long-term goals-

- **Earn better money?**
- **Have a good working environment?**
- **Get a degree like my sister?**
- **Be able to work overseas?**

Write your goals in a conspicuous place so that you will keep them in mind. In addition to the long-term goals, you should have some goals that can be accomplished in two or three weeks.

Set some short-term goals -

- **Have a regular routine of monitoring your progress**
- **Cross off short-term goals that have been achieved**
- **Decide what the next step is for those on-going but unfinished tasks**
- **Set new goals**

This process brings a great sense of completion and satisfaction when you see yourself gradually accomplishing the semester's assignments and other things as well.

SMART Goals

Goals are easier to achieve when they are **SMART goals**:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Relevant**
- **Time-related**

The Swiss cheese method

Turn large goals into several mini smart goals

When you are doing academic work such as writing an essay or a lesson plan, it is easier to break up the whole goal (the essay) into a sequence of tasks or mini-goals. This way each goal is more likely to be achievable. You will feel you are succeeding and coping with your work load, instead of drowning. This is called the Swiss cheese method because you 'make holes' in large tasks by doing them a bit at a time.

Here is an essay writing example of the Swiss cheese method goals

- **Analyze topic and write key search words**
- **Go to library and search for suitable sources of information**
- **Read relevant sections of sources noting useful information**
- **Do an additional search using the internet and download the two best references**
- **Do a broader plan for the essay based on the ideas from your reading and lectures**
- **Draft a thesis statement to guide your response to the topic question**
- **Start writing**
- **Write more**
- **Review and revise**
- **Make the reference list**

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Using this goal-oriented approach to your work also helps you plan your time. It helps you decide which of the steps are likely to take more time, and therefore what day, when, and where you will be able to fit them in. Time is not unlimited and you often have lots of other responsibilities too. To prevent the academic demands from taking over (or conversely from not receiving enough attention) you need to apply some time management principles. Some people find the term time management scary because they envisage rigid timetables which become impossible to keep, but do not be put off. Be a SMART student and make sure you are on target to pass your courses.

Motivation

Motivation is the drive or energy that you bring to an activity. Motivators are often rewards and students have to organize their own rewards, or motivators, such as watching television when readings are completed or lunch with a friend when the assignment is done.

It is important to know what motivates us and how to use these motivations to achieve our study goals.

Try this exercise

Think of a time when you know you were very motivated.

What was that occasion?

What were the motivators (money, satisfaction, wanting/needing high marks, wanting to please someone, wanting to win, interest)?

Write down how you could use one of those motivators to help you with your study.

Adapted from: <https://owll.massey.ac.nz/study-skills/goals-and-motivation.php>