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| **SMART Goals** | |
| **S**pecific | *What do you want to accomplish? Be as specific as possible—think about “baby steps.”* |
| **M**easurable | *How can you measure your progress? How will you know when the goal is accomplished? (If you’re not sure, this might indicate that the goal is vague.)* |
| **A**ttainable | *How attainable is the goal? Be reasonable, but also aim high: research shows that “reach” goals can create more motivation.* |
| **R**easonable | *Is this goal reasonable, given your process, real life, etc.? What conditions have to exist for you to work towards this goal?* |
| **T**imely | *What is your specific timeframe or deadline? How much time will this goal need? What is a realistic writing schedule?* |

**Writing Goals[[1]](#footnote-1)**

If you’re not used to doing this, setting manageable writing goals may take some practice. You might find some of these suggestions and strategies useful, but please don’t feel constrained to these guidelines. Everyone’s process is unique.

**Effective Goal Setting**

* Plan for the long term and the short term, but don’t worry about outlining every step. (e.g., What is your long-term goal? What’s the *next* step you need to take in order to make progress towards it?)
* Try setting a range of goals: unreasonable goals, reasonable goals, and the bare minimum
* Goals should not be set in stone; though do (and should) change as you make progress.
* It might be helpful to think about your A-time (when you’re at your best), your B-time (when you’re not at your best, but can still be productive), and your C-time (when you are not very productive). These might be times during the day and even days throughout the week. It’s reasonable to set different goals based on when you’re at your best. During A-time, you might focus on more cognitively challenging tasks, such as drafting or revising. During B-time, you might take care of smaller writing tasks that need to get done, but that you don’t need to be at your best to complete (such as reviewing an article you’re already read or tracking down citations).
* It’s okay to start small.
* Reflect on your process (and progress).
* Reward yourself.
* Share your goals.
* Be reasonable; leave wiggle-room for life.

**“Process” Goals (Goals that target the writing process)**

* Goals that focus on the process of drafting and revision might include:
  + Freewriting about a problem or question
  + Working through a writing challenge or conceptual problem using strategies such as brainstorming, outlining/mapping, questioning and/or talking back to your draft
  + Rebooting your process by trying new strategies, such as reverse outlines, a writer’s journal, freewriting, concept mapping, etc.
  + Feeling better about the writing process (or your current project); remotivating yourself
  + Figuring out how to enter into the critical conversation (such as by responding to sources through freewriting, mapping, or writing dialogues, etc.)
  + Answer a question by reviewing sources

**“Product” Goals (Goals that target the written product)**

* Goals that focus on the written product might include:
  + Drafting 100 or 500 words for a particular writing project
  + Drafting a certain number of paragraphs in your writing project
  + Creating a reverse outline of your draft, and using this outline to evaluate your organization, focus, transitions, etc.
  + See how much you can accomplish by simply tracking word counts during a writing session

**A few writing strategies...**

* Scheduling
* Outlining
* Chunking/color coding
* Freewriting
* Reverse outlining
* Mapping (concepts/ideas/sources/scholarly conversation)
* Self-assessment

1. Rachel Lee and Liz Tinelli (Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program, University of Rochester): [gradwriting@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:gradwriting@ur.rochester.edu)

   <http://writing.rochester.edu/services/GraduateStudentServices.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)