

Setting SMART objectives – Action Check List

Specific	
<p>Objectives should be specific. They should describe the result that is desired in a way that is, detailed, focused and well defined.</p> <p>The following questions may be helpful in formulating specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What outcomes are we looking for? ➤ Is it clear what the objective means? ➤ How will this be achieved and what strategies will be followed? ➤ What needs to happen? ➤ What are we going to do, with or for whom? ➤ Who will be responsible for what and do we need anyone else to be involved? ➤ When do we want this to be completed? 	<p>When writing objectives, especially for individuals, use action-orientated verbs which describe what needs to be done to achieve the objectives.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ analyse ➤ apply ➤ change ➤ create ➤ determine ➤ differentiate ➤ identify ➤ instigate ➤ perform.
Measurable	
<p>Measurement is hugely important because it will enable you to know whether an objective has been achieved. To be measurable an objective should describe an achievement or outcome which is or can be related to a percentage, a frequency, rate or number. Evidence will need to be derived from a system, method or procedure which has tracked and recorded the outcomes related to the objective.</p>	<p>To help in setting measurable outcomes, think about the desired outcome and which elements can be measured. Consider these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How will I know that the change has occurred? ➤ Can these measurements be obtained?
Achievable (or agreed)	
<p>An objective can be said to be achievable if the necessary resources are available or similar results have been achieved by others in similar circumstances. Questions to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Who will carry out the actions required? ➤ Do they have the necessary skills to do the task well? ➤ Are the resources (personnel, funding, time, equipment etc.) to achieve this objective available or can they be obtained? 	<p>For this reason it is vital to discuss objectives, especially those relating to individuals and reach agreement on them.</p> <p>Bear in mind that setting objectives too low can also lead to demotivation and disillusionment. Stretching objectives provide an incentive to put effort and commitment into finding ways to reach the target. Most people will rise to a challenge as long as it is not excessive.</p>

<p>➤ Who will bear responsibility for what?</p> <p>'Achievable' implies that those to whom it is assigned are willing and able to achieve it. If objectives are seen to be unachievable those responsible for them are likely to lose motivation and become demoralised. Individuals will be unwilling to invest energy and enthusiasm into something which they do not believe to be possible.</p>	
Realistic (or relevant)	
<p>The concepts of 'realistic' and 'achievable' are similar and this may explain why some use the term 'relevant' as an alternative.</p> <p>'Realistic' suggests that there is a clear understanding of how the objective might be reached; that there are no circumstances or factors which would make the achievement of the objective impossible or unlikely; and that any potential obstacles and constraints have been taken into account.</p> <p>'Relevant' suggests that the objectives set are appropriate to the individual or team and their job role and function or at organisational level that they align with the overall purpose and strategy of the organisation</p>	
Timely (or time-bound)	
<p>It is necessary to set a date or time by which the objective should have been accomplished or completed and this contributes to making objectives measurable. For objectives that may take weeks or even months to fully achieve it is good practice to identify milestones or key steps and to set deadlines for these to help keep progress towards the end objective on track.</p>	<p>A deadline helps to create the necessary urgency, prompts action and focuses the minds of those who are accountable for the commitments that they have made in agreeing to the objectives. Not setting deadlines will reduce levels of urgency and motivation and may result in unnecessary delays or failure to reach the objectives. Ask yourself whether the objective can be accomplished within the deadlines which have been established, bearing in mind other possible competing demands which may cause delay.</p>