

Tony Hollins is the director of the Education First Learning Centre in East Gosford on the NSW Central Coast. He has masters' degrees in education and clinical psychology. Tony has been an educator since 1982 at all levels from pre-school to university and is a registered psychologist.

Students: get SMART and set some goals for the new year



Were you happy with your performance at school last year? Would you like to do better this year? Wishing will not make it happen – you need to set some goals.

Can you tell the difference between a wish and a goal? A **goal** is a result you desire, toward which you direct an effort. A **wish** is made by a person who also desires a result, but who really doesn't believe that anything they do will help them achieve the result.

Which of these statements do you think is the best goal?

- a) *I want to be a good student.*
- b) *I will score 90% in my half-yearly maths' exam.*
- c) *I want to get high marks this year.*
- d) *I will come first in my class in maths.*

If you chose "b", well done. The goals most likely to be achieved are **S.M.A.R.T.**

SMART goals do not include any reference to a ranking or position. You have no control over the performance of other students, who may be working even harder than you. It is better to benchmark your goals against mastery of the course material or your own previous best in that subject.

Goals should not be set too high, as it is hard to motivate yourself when you really feel you will never get to that level. If your highest mark to date is 40%, your first goal should not be 90%. Try aiming for 60%. Your goal should not be set too low, as there is no satisfaction in achieving something that you can already do.

To be able to overcome the physical, environmental and psychological obstacles that will block achievement of your goal, you must be more than interested in your goal. You need to make a **commitment** to achieving the goal, and this will only happen if you believe you will directly benefit...

S M A R T	
SPECIFIC	detailed, particular, focused, accurate
MEASURABLE	against a standard
ACHIEVABLE	practical, possible
RELEVANT	important to you
TIME LIMITED	scheduled, regulated by time

You can ask yourself “What’s in it for me?” A goal should definitely be **written** rather than just being an idea in your head and, if possible, **shared** with another person who is interested in seeing the goal achieved.

Once your goal is determined, write an **action plan** to make it happen. Write out your **strategies**, as steps you will take to reach the goal. You can then **monitor** your progress and, if necessary, revise your strategies. But do not **revise** your goal, as you have already worked out that it is realistic.

Strategies like these will help achieve the goal of better results in most subjects:

- I keep my study space well organised.

- Each day I review the work covered in class and organise my notes.
- I study for at least two hours per day on Monday to Thursday and three hours on the weekend.
- I prepare questions to ask my teacher.
- My seat in class is away from distractions so I can focus on learning.

You become successful the moment you start working towards a worthwhile goal. Goals can be set for each day, each term and each year to help you achieve great results. You will find that when you are committed to achieving your best at school, you will not be distracted by others who are not.

So stop wishing, and get SMART.
