

Using SMART for Planning & Setting Objectives

SMART is an acronym used in project management. It is a way of evaluating objectives or goals. After the planning stage, you should identify your goals, to define how you measure success. Goals should be SMART - specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic and time-bound.

Setting out SMART targets can enable you to develop a clear work plan for what you need to achieve and therefore help you manage your time effectively. This also encourages you to keep on track with how your progress is developing and enables you to 'tick off' the completed actions as you work through them. This approach can be used individually or for team planning and setting out group objectives.

Creating truly SMART objectives can be quite challenging. It can help to apply the following questions, in order to get focused and break down each task.

S Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the task to be done? • What are the details/does the task need to be broken down further? • Is this a key area of the project? • Make sure it really is 'specific'
M Measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence could be used to show what has been achieved? • What will be different when the task is completed? • How does this fit with the wider picture? • Make sure your measures are detailed!
A Agreed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the task possible? • Have you got the skills you need? • Has this task been approved - where appropriate? • Do you have the support you need to achieve it?
R Realistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is this target important? • How key is this task to the project? • Will completion improve your activities? • Are you able to complete it in the way it needs to be done?
T Time-bound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When should the task be done by? • How often should the task be done? • Have you built in review dates to support you? • If it's on-going – make sure you check progress