



EDUCATOR ACTIVITY | GRADE RANGE: 6–8

## Goal Setting

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Learn the elements of and procedures for setting a SMART goal.
- Understand the benefits of goal setting.
- Identify meaningful sustainability actions to benefit their community.
- Write SMART goals toward a stated purpose.

### OVERVIEW

After learning how to set SMART goals as a method of problem solving, students will participate in a brainstorming discussion with the purpose of identifying meaningful actions they can take in their community to be more sustainable or have a more positive impact on their environment. They will end by writing their own SMART goal for their personal sustainability behaviors.

### TIMING

1 session (approximately 45 minutes)

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- **SMART Goals** student handout, one per student
- **My Sustainability SMART Goal** student handout, one per student
- **Exit Ticket** student handout, one half-sheet per student

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How can setting goals help me be more sustainable?

### PROCEDURE

Engage

1. Introduce the activity's essential question. Consider having it written on a board or a large piece of poster paper. Reinforce that the goal of today's lesson is for students to feel confident discussing the question by the end of the session.
2. Review what is meant by "sustainability." Explain to students that sustainability means to maintain a certain rate or level. What it means regarding the environment is to avoid using *all* of a natural resource, with the goal of keeping the environment balanced. Emphasize that sustainability

means that the current generation works to meet its own needs without affecting the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

3. If needed, consider sharing ideas about what it means to set goals that focus on sustainability. You can show students the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as an example using [sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals). As you click on an example goal, invite students to share what they notice about how the goals are tracked to demonstrate progress. Students should understand that while these are big goals, taking smaller actions can lead to big results.
4. For the next 5–10 minutes, engage students in the upcoming lesson by asking one or more of the following questions:
  - Do you set goals and write them down?
  - For what types of situations do you set goals?
  - How do you know if you have accomplished a goal?
  - Why is goal setting important?

### Learn

5. Explain to students that goal setting helps us figure out and define what we really want in life, from school, to athletics, to personal aspirations. It can help us lay out a list of attainable achievements we want to accomplish within a certain time, and helps us keep our time and our resources focused.
6. One successful method of goal setting is writing SMART goals. Emphasize that goal setting is not simply stating, “I want to do something.” There is an actual process to defining, working towards the completion of, and assessing the achievement of a goal, much like the examples of the SDGs.
7. Distribute one **SMART Goals** Student Handout to each student, explaining that SMART is an acronym. Invite a volunteer to read each of the letters for the acronym, stopping to clarify as needed.
8. Provide and analyze an example of an open-ended “I want” statement versus a thought-out SMART goal. An example might be:
  - *Open-Ended:* I want to swim better than I did last season.
  - vs.
  - *SMART goal:* By the end of this season, I want to decrease my personal best time in the 500-yard freestyle swim by eight seconds from my time last season.

### Apply

9. Remind students that while SMART goals can help us achieve personal academic and athletic accomplishments more efficiently, they can also help us and our communities move forward with issues that can benefit everyone.

10. Next, ask students to define a sustainability problem that they notice in their community. Encourage students to consider the problem, why it might exist, and who is impacted by the issue.
11. Invite students to start brainstorming ideas about actions that they, their friends, their neighbors, or their families could take to address the previously defined problem. As students volunteer ideas, record them somewhere visible to the class, such as a whiteboard or chart paper.
  - **Anticipated responses might include:** speaking at a community meeting, reducing litter, encouraging walking or biking, turning off the lights every time you leave the room, reducing food waste, starting a garden, taking shorter showers, etc.

### Challenge

12. Distribute a **My Sustainability SMART Goal** student handout to each student.
13. Instruct students to choose an idea from the brainstorming list that they feel strongly about and that feels relevant to them and the community in which they live. Provide time for them to use the SMART Goal template on the handout to work through each letter of the acronym, taking notes as they go, to determine how they can achieve a goal relevant to the issue.

**Note:** *Emphasize to students that it is not always necessary to tackle an entire issue or long-term endeavor in a single goal. A SMART goal can help someone achieve a manageable step toward a larger accomplishment. For example, if the long-term goal is a successful community garden, a management SMART goal for a student might surround scheduling a meeting regarding permissions, or writing a plan.*
14. After students have worked through each letter of the acronym, guide them in summarizing their notes into one clearly written goal statement in the “My Goal” box at the bottom of the handout.

### Reflect

15. Distribute an **Exit Ticket** Student Handout to each student and ask them to reflect upon the activity's essential question. Collect them as students leave and use responses to determine their level of understanding. Consider taking time in a future session to address misconceptions, highlight key takeaways, or share interesting insights brought up on the tickets.

### EXTENSION IDEAS

- Distribute the activity's Family Connection for students to bring home to extend their learning and include their families in meaningful action.
- Provide students with a list of “I want” statements and challenge them to rewrite each one as a SMART goal. Or provide a mixture of “I want” and thought-out SMART goals for students to analyze and identify.
- Work with teachers across content areas to incorporate SMART goal setting into students' academic experiences.

## **NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARDS**

Science and Engineering Practices:

- Asking Questions and Defining Problems

CCSSI Standards for Mathematical Practice:

- **CCSS-Math-MP1:** Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

**S**

**PECIFIC**

What *exactly* do you want to accomplish?



**M**

**EASURABLE**

How will you measure whether you have successfully met your goal?



**A**

**TTAINABLE**

Is this goal realistic with the amount of time, talent, and resources you possess?  
Do you have the skills to achieve this goal?



**R**

**ELEVANT**

Is this goal aligned to a specific area of your life? Ask yourself why you are setting this goal?



**T**

**IME**

Clearly define the time frame you have set for achieving this goal.



**S**  
**SPECIFIC**

What *exactly* do you want to accomplish?

**M**  
**MEASURABLE**

How will you measure whether you have successfully met your goal?

**A**  
**ATTAINABLE**

Is this goal realistic with the amount of time, talent, and resources you possess? Do you have the skills to achieve this goal?

**R**  
**RELEVANT**

Is this goal aligned to a specific area of your life? Ask yourself why you are setting this goal?

**T**  
**TIME-BOUND**

Clearly define the time frame you have set for achieving this goal.

GOAL:

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How can setting goals help me be more sustainable?



How can setting goals help me be more sustainable?