

Fact Sheet – Goal Setting

Goal setting refers to the process by which people create specific, measurable and time targeted objectives for achieving desired outcomes.

We may have a dream or a vision of something, but to make it a goal, we need to make it specific. This means expressing clearly what you want (for example 'I want to do a summer clerkship' rather than 'I want experience'), in a positive way (for example 'I want to pass Torts' rather than 'I don't want to fail Torts'), and realistic (for example 'I want to achieve two credits and two distinctions this semester' rather than 'I want to achieve high distinctions in everything'). Once we have a clear, positively stated, realistic goal, we can work out the strategies we will use to achieve it. We can then break down each strategy into small action items, which together will move us towards our goal.

Let's say for example our goal was to achieve a credit in Torts this semester. This could be expressed as follows:

Goal:

To achieve a credit in Torts this semester

Strategies:

- Participation
- Analysis
- Exam Preparation

Action items:

Participation

1. Go to 90% of the lectures and seminars
2. Do the readings the day before class
3. Contribute something to every class

Analysis

1. Meet in my study group every 2nd Tuesday
2. Prepare three case notes a week
3. Read one extra journal article every week

Exam Preparation

1. Type up my lecture notes every Friday
2. Add notes from my readings every Monday
3. Do past papers during the semester vacation

You can then write these tasks in your diary and tick them off when you have done them.

If you have a tendency to set goals and not accomplish them, maybe you need the following tools:

- *'Going Public'* – share your goals with someone, and ask them to check up on you to see if you have got them done.
- *'Rating Progress'* – get a piece of cardboard and chart out the action steps for the semester. Each time you do one, put a gold star on top of it.
- *'Reward Yourself'* – create a system where you get a reward whenever you accomplish a certain number of action steps. Something good for you is best, like a walk around the block or a half hour break to watch your favourite TV show.
- *'Petty Punishments'* – create a penalty for yourself if you fail (just small and petty, or else you might lie about it!). For example, tell a fellow student you will buy them a coffee if you haven't done all your action items by the time you meet for your study group with them.