



GOAL SETTING: ASPIRE'S STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



SETTING YOUR GOALS

No matter what you wish to achieve — a promotion, losing weight, quitting smoking or climbing a mountain — you will need to set goals. Goals keep us on track and focused. However, there is a method to goal setting that can help you plot your goals strategically. We have compiled this step-by-step guide to show you how.

STEP 1: DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT FROM LIFE

Imagine your life as you'd ideally like it to be. Consider aspects such as family life, friends, professional success, educational achievements, money, time and experiences. If you could change the key aspects of your life, how would they be different?

Family — What kind of life would you like for your family?

Income — How much money do you want to earn this year, over the next five years and over the course of your working life?

Health — How would you like your health to be better?

Relationships — What improvements would you make to your relationships with your loved ones, family and friends?

Professional life — What changes would you like to see in your career?

Do this quickly without thinking too much. Write down the three most important goals in your life right now. You may have many goals but these three are the most important.

STEP 2: MAKE A LIST WITH DEADLINES

Write down your goals. Make them specific and measurable. For example: "I want to quit smoking by February and do a marathon by June" not "I want to stop smoking and get fit."

Deadlines, even self-imposed ones, keep us on schedule. If your goal is big it is useful to create a series of mini-deadlines as well. Let's say you want to write a book, set goals for when you will complete your research and finish each chapter. Sometimes we underestimate the amount of time it can take to do something. Losing weight comes to mind! In this case, revise your deadlines. As long as you keep working towards each goal or mini-goal, you will get there in the end.

STEP 3: LOOK OUT FOR OBSTACLES

Some goals are easier to achieve than others. Whatever you want to achieve, there are always going to be obstacles that try and prevent us from reaching our goals.

The good news — and bad news — is that the majority of these are self-imposed. We tell ourselves that we can't do something, that we don't have time to do it and so forth. Try and identify the obstacles that you put in your own way.

STEP 4: IDENTIFY THE INFORMATION & SKILLS YOU NEED

What knowledge do you need to learn or what skills should you acquire to achieve your goal? If your goal is professional success, consider what skills you are lacking, and which skill will help you achieve the most.

If your goal is a personal one, such as creating a more loving relationship with a partner or family member, consider what skills or qualities you need to have — patience, empathy, kindness — that will help you relate better to them.

STEP 5: IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE WHOSE HELP YOU NEED

None of us achieve anything solely on our own. Family members, friends, teachers, colleagues all help us along the way. No man (or woman) is an island.

Make a list of the people whose support, co-operation, knowledge or skills you will need to help you achieve your goal. Ask them if they will be able and willing to assist you. They may be more willing than you realise.

When you have done this consider what's in it for them or how you can help and support them too. Answer this question honestly. The most successful people create and build mutually supportive networks around themselves.

STEP 6: MAKE A DETAILED, SCHEDULED LIST

Consider the obstacles you have to overcome, the skills you may need to acquire, the people whose support or help you'll need and everything else you require to achieve your goal. Organise the list according to sequence and priority. The sequence is the steps you need to follow, and the priority is how important each is.

STEP 7: MAKE A PLAN

Consult your detailed, prioritised list. Arrange these into steps from the beginning through to the completion of your goal. If you have a plan as well as a goal, you are far more likely to achieve it. In order to reach your goal, your overall plan should be broken down into a plan for each day, week and month. To keep on track, do this:

- Draw up your plan for each day the evening before
- Plan each week the weekend before
- Do up your monthly plan at the start of the month

The more detailed you are, the better. Planning ahead saves time in execution. Spend time on each plan.

STEP 8: SELECT THE MOST IMPORTANT TASKS FOR EACH DAY

Look at your plan for the day and ask yourself the following question: *Which of these is the most valuable use of my time?* Once you have answered that, mark that task as No. 1.

Next ask yourself: *Which of these remaining tasks will contribute the most towards my goal?* Mark your answer as No. 2.

Go through your daily list and mark each task in order of importance.

STEP 9: FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME

Once you know what your most important tasks are for each day you'll need to stay on point to achieve them. In order to do this you need to focus on one thing at a time. Avoid all distractions, such as emails or social media, until you are done.

STEP 10: VISUALISE YOUR GOALS

If you find yourself flagging or getting discouraged, it helps to have a clear picture of your goal. Imagine you have already achieved your goal. Make this visualisation as detailed as possible.

If your goal is climbing a mountain, visualise yourself looking out over the vista, feeling the wind blowing, and smelling the fresh air around you. Next imagine how you would feel in this moment on the summit. Visualisation spurs us on and helps us to keep working towards our goals.