

# Five Steps to Goal-Setting

By Jennifer Minar

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"The most important thing about motivation is goal setting. You should always have a goal." - Francie Larrieu Smith (American Runner)

What would you like to achieve in your lifetime?

Author Basil S. Walth once said, "If you don't know where you are going, how can you expect to get there?" These are words well spoken, because whether you're working toward freelancing full-time or selling your novels, you need a roadmap.

Goals are indispensable. They provide direction, long-term vision and short-term motivation. They separate the important from the irrelevant. Goals also build self-confidence by helping you grow as an individual.

Olympic athletes, successful business people, and (hint...) bestselling writers are goal setters. You aspire to greatness too, don't you? If you do, and you're not already setting goals, now is the perfect time to start.

Five Things to Remember When Setting Goals:

## 1. Write Goals Down

Always jot down your goals-this is powerful. The process of physically seeing your goals helps crystallize them in your mind. This process also better enables you to commit to them.

Interesting Fact: A popular Harvard Business School study once found that only 3% of the population records their goals in writing. Another 14% have goals but don't write them down, whereas 83% do not even have clearly defined goals. More interesting is that this 3% earned an astounding ten times that of the 83% group!

## 2. Make Goals Short, Attainable, & Measurable

Set attainable short-term goals that can be measured. This means setting quantifiable goals.

Here are some examples:

- Commit to writing a certain number of words each week
- Submit at least two articles a week
- Find two new markets each week
- Take at least one writing course a year
- Attend at least one writer's conference a year

Make your goals attainable so you won't get discouraged. The short-term goals above are attainable for me, but they may not be for you. Or maybe for you, my short-term goals aren't challenging enough. Goals are very individual. You have to set your own goals...remember, you're charting your own course to success!

On the other hand, don't set wimpy goals simply because you're afraid to fail. Talane Miedaner, author of *Coach Yourself to Success* (McGraw-Hill/Contemporary Books, 2002) notes: "People sometimes give themselves 'weeny' goals-they play it safe so they don't fail...But the bigger the goal, the more likely you are to achieve it."

### 3. Create Deadlines

Without deadlines, your goals are merely dreams. Set deadlines for both short- and long-term goals, and I promise, you'll get there sooner!

Remember that deadlines can be flexible. Life changes and so do goals. Never be afraid to adjust the timeframe for a goal. What's important is to keep moving forward.

### 4. Look at your goals everyday!

Visual aids are an effective way to program your brain.

Reading and re-writing goals are two very effective visual aids. By physically rewriting your goals and pasting them in places you regularly frequent, you make them more real in your mind.

I read an article in this month's *Shape* magazine that inspired me. The author mentioned that before Sarah Ban Breathnach, author of the bestselling book & Oprah Pick *Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy* (Warner Books, 1995) became a bestselling author, she pasted her name on the #1 spot of the New York Times bestseller list and posted it on her computer. Visual Aids like these give you that extra ammunition that will make a difference.

### 5. Make Goal Setting a Routine

Begin every morning with a "To Do" list. This will help you organize and better manage your time. Plus, your goals will be right smack under your nose every day. Do not get discouraged over any unfinished items. Simply transfer them to the next morning's list.

The above said, keep your goals front and forward in your mind. Remember...you only get one chance to live your dreams!

In the words of Cecil B. De Mille: "The person who makes a success of living is the one who sees

his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly. That is dedication."

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