

GOAL SETTING

PRIORITIZING TASKS

If you've decided to make some changes in how you manage your time, one of the first steps is to set some specific, tangible goals. When you know what your goals are, you'll be more likely to both plan and use your time more effectively. Goal-setting can also help you prioritize when you have a lot of tasks that all need to be completed within a tight timeframe. You'll be less likely to procrastinate if you know what your goals are, and why you want to achieve them.



Goals are often organized into short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. A long-term goal could be getting into medical school, developing skills and knowledge in a field of study, or simply graduating. In other words, a long-term goal (for university students, at least) attempts to answer the question, "Why am I here?" or "What do I want to get out of my university experience?"

Medium-term goals start to break down the long-term goal into smaller, more tangible components. For a student hoping to get into medical school, a medium-term goal could be achieving 80% in a Biology class.

A short-term goal is a specific, short task - achievable within a limited timeframe - that will help you reach your medium-term and long-term goals. For the student wanting to achieve 80% in Biology, a short-term goal might be reviewing Biology lecture notes on a weekly basis. When you're setting short-term goals, it's important to be as specific as possible. You'll be much more likely to accomplish a goal as specific as "Review Biology lecture notes from the previous week every Sunday" than a more general goal, such as "Study Biology." Read [Making a Task List](#) for details about how to write short-term goals and incorporate them into your time management plan.

STAYING FOCUSED

You may find that you run into problems when you have a lot of short-term goals but not enough time to accomplish each goal completely; many students experience this situation at the end of the semester when final papers and reports are due. Another common situation is the emergence of a new short-term goal which disrupts your ability to accomplish other short-term goals. For example, you may realize after a midterm that you didn't set aside enough time to study for a particular course, but you may feel that you have to "sacrifice" something else (often study time for another course or an extracurricular activity) in order to accomplish your new goal (in this example, studying more for a course).

In situations like these, being aware of your long-term goals can help you make sound decisions about what to do on a short-term basis. You shouldn't have to feel that you must sacrifice one goal in order to achieve another one; instead, you should feel that you know what your most important long-term goals are and that you've identified the short-term goals that will help you realize those long-term goals.

Take some time at the beginning of each semester to write down your long-term, medium-term, and short-term goals. Although goals often change through the semester, having a starting point for knowing what you want to get out of the upcoming semester will help you keep focused when you're faced with a lot of choices about how to manage your time.