

How to use Goals as Motivation to Achieve

By definition, a goal is something that you want to achieve. Take a minute and think about why you are pursuing a college education. Do you want to increase your chances of landing that dream job? Are you training for a career change? Will you be the first person in your family to obtain a college degree? Your

reason for attending college is often the best place to start when setting goals because it will give you a broad goal toward which all of your other, smaller goals can be directed. By setting goals, you will improve your overall academic performance because you will be more motivated to complete your assignments and to study.

Characteristics of Goals

Realistic

- In order to reach your goals, they must be attainable. Setting goals that are too high can cause feelings of failure if you do not meet them.
- If you are unsure of how to set attainable, realistic goals, see the handout titled Goal Statements: Writing Effective Goal Statements in Four Steps.

Measurable

- Goals should be specific enough that they can be measured. Only by measuring results can you tell whether or not you have reached your goal.
- For instance, if you state that your goal is to “do well in the course,” how would you measure that? It will be much easier to measure your outcome if you state that your goal is to earn an A or a B in the course. This specificity applies to smaller study goals also. “Studying biology” is not a measurable goal. However, if you state that you will read pages 20 to 30 and answer the sample problems at the end of the chapter, you have a measurable goal.

Finite

- Your goals should always include a time frame. Reading pages 20 to 30 and answering the sample problems by Wednesday night is a measurable, finite goal.

Positive

- Negative goals are not motivating. “I will not fail my math class” is a negative goal. Compare this to the goal, “I will earn a C in my math class.” Which one makes you feel that you can be successful?
- In addition, avoid words such as try, think, hope, and should. These words offer a way out of achieving your goal. Stating, “I will try to complete my biology reading and sample problems by Wednesday night” allows you to say that you did try even though you did not finish the assignment.

Self-Chosen

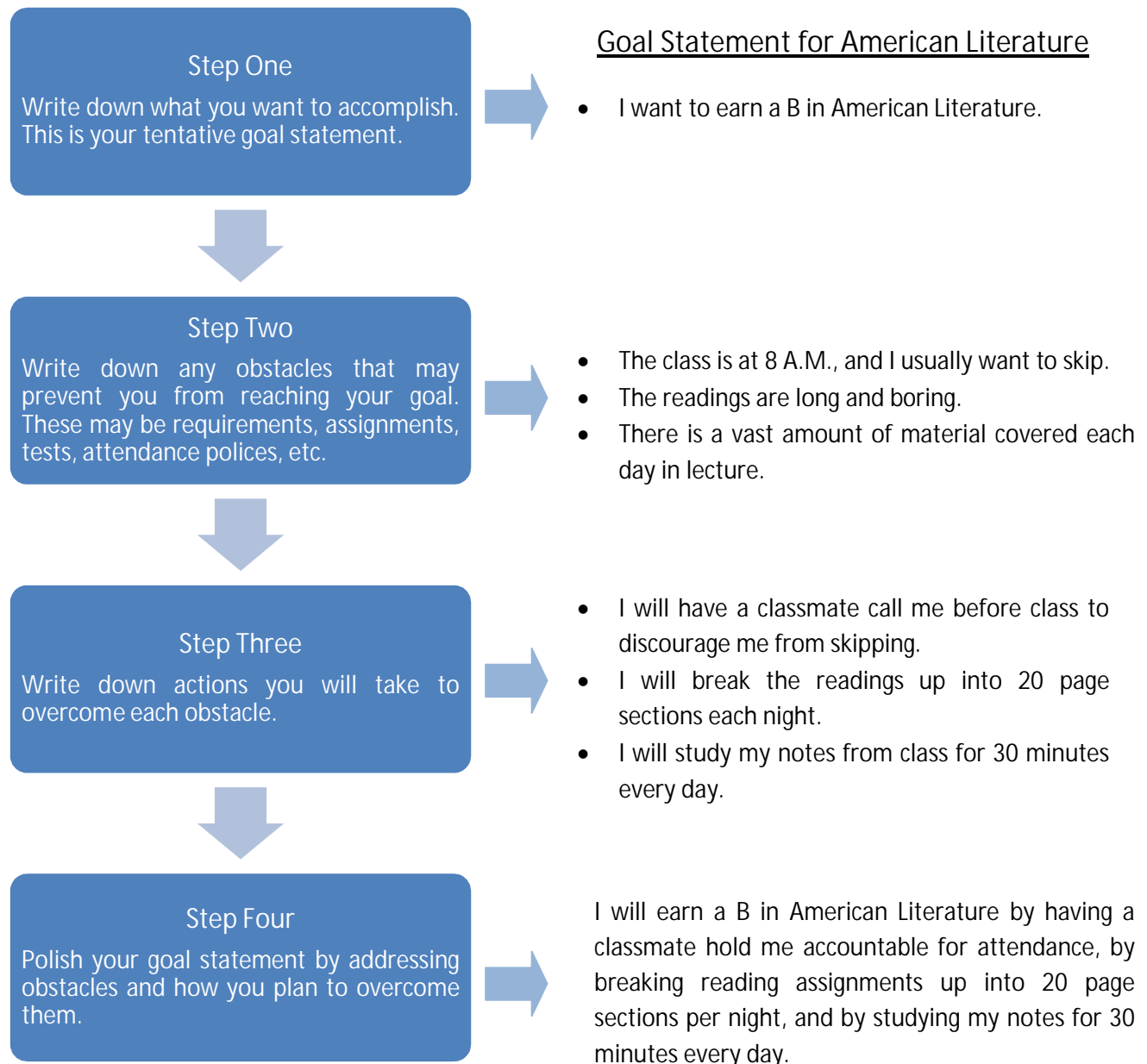
- Your goals are your goals. Goals set by others such as your parents or friends may not work for you. By setting your own goals, you will be more motivated to achieve them.



Writing Effective Goal Statements in Four Steps

Composing goals may not be as straight forward as you initially think. You must consider exactly what you want to accomplish, obstacles that stand in your way, how you will overcome those obstacles, and a time

frame for completing your goals. A convenient way to organize your goals is by course. Thus, if you are taking four courses, you will want to complete the following four-step process for each course.



Semester: _____

Course: _____

Step One

Write down what you want to accomplish. This is your tentative goal statement.



Step Two

Write down any obstacles that may prevent you from reaching your goal. These may be requirements, assignments, tests, attendance policies, etc.



Step Three

Write down actions you will take to overcome each obstacle.



Step Four

Polish your goal statement by addressing obstacles and how you plan to overcome them.