

Writing SMART Objectives

To use an objective to monitor your progress, you need to write it as a SMART objective. A SMART objective is:

1. Specific:

- Objectives should provide the “who” and “what” of program activities.
- Use only one action verb since objectives with more than one verb imply that more than one activity or behavior is being measured.
- Avoid verbs that may have vague meanings to describe intended outcomes (e.g., “understand” or “know”) since it may prove difficult to measure them. Instead, use verbs that document action (e.g., “At the end of the session, the students will list three concerns...”)
- Remember, the greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.

2. Measurable:

- The focus is on “how much” change is expected. Objectives should quantify the amount of change expected. It is impossible to determine whether objectives have been met unless they can be measured.
- The objective provides a reference point from which a change in the target population can clearly be measured.

3. Achievable:

- Objectives should be attainable within a given time frame and with available program resources.

4. Relevant:

- Objectives are most useful when they accurately address the scope of the problem and programmatic steps that can be implemented within a specific time frame.
- Objectives that do not directly relate to the program goal will not help toward achieving the goal.

5. Time-Bound:

- Objectives should provide a time frame indicating when the objective will be measured or a time by which the objective will be met.
- Including a time frame in the objectives helps in planning and evaluating the program.

SMART objective examples:

- Increase by 10 percentage points (to 35%) by Oct. 2015 the proportion of local residents who report awareness of social and legal consequences of underage drinking.
- Increase media’s voluntary coverage of drug-related topics by 300% (triple the number of earned coverage episodes) by Sept. 2015
- Reduce by 15% the percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting 30-day use of marijuana by February 2016. Baseline measure shows 25% of 12-17 year olds reported 30-day use of marijuana.