

Set Reachable Long-Term and Short-Term Goals

A LONG-TERM GOAL takes a while to accomplish. A *short-term goal* is one of several steps you might take to reach a long-term goal. Suppose one of your long-term goals is to get a degree. Completing a course required to earn that degree would be one of many short-term goals you would accomplish in the process. Figure 4.1 contrasts long-term goals with some short-term goals you might set to reach them.

As you can see from Figure 4.1, long-term and short-term are relative terms. Though graduation from college may be a long-term goal since it takes several years to reach, it may also be a short-term goal when you view it as a step toward getting your dream job—a goal that may take many more years. Similarly, completing a required course may be a short-term goal needed to reach the longer-term goal of graduation. However, completing that course might also seem to be a long-term goal when compared with the short-term goals of completing the daily assignments or scoring well on the weekly quizzes needed to pass the course. The key to successful goal setting is to know what your long-term goals are and what short-term goals you need to set to reach them.

In general, you can think of goals as personal, academic, and career or work related. Figure 4.2 compares three types of goals.

Most students are in college because they seek the skills and knowledge that will make them employable. Although some enter college with a career in mind, many are undecided. Some students, like Ellen, change their minds. Ellen had always wanted to be a nurse, even though she knew little about what the job entailed. After completing her required courses, she was accepted into her college's nursing program. Ellen's math and science skills were strong, and she enjoyed tak-

Figure 4.1 Long-Term and Short-Term Goals

LONG-TERM GOALS	SHORT-TERM GOALS
Complete a course successfully.	Attend regularly. Arrive on time each day. Make a study schedule and follow it. Improve note-taking skills. Earn good grades. Keep up with assignments.
Graduate from college.	Complete required courses. Complete additional courses needed. Meet all degree requirements. Apply for graduation and pay fees.
Get a job in a chosen career field.	Get the degree or obtain the experience necessary to qualify. Prepare a résumé. Apply for the job. Have a successful interview. Repeat steps as needed until you are hired.

Figure 4.2 Three Types of Goals

Personal Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Losing weight Improving fitness Developing a positive attitude Increasing time spent with family Overcoming a bad habit
Academic Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passing a difficult course Making a grade of A on a test Improving reading comprehension Developing good study skills Graduating from college
Career/Work Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting the job you want Getting a raise or promotion Changing jobs or careers Improving relations with coworkers Upgrading job skills or learning new ones

ing her anatomy and physiology course as well as the other courses in her program. But when one of her courses required her to spend time in a local hospital tending to the needs of the sick, she realized immediately that nursing was not what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. She was suited neither to working in a hospital environment nor to the stress that accompanies a career in nursing. At first, Ellen was at a loss. She had invested her time and money in a career that she no longer wanted to pursue. To change her major could add a year or more to her graduation time; nevertheless, that is what she decided to do. Ellen is now the financial manager of an electronics corporation. She can't imagine having a more rewarding career, and she believes that changing her major from nursing to marketing was the right decision for her.

Ellen's story illustrates how personal, academic, and career goals can overlap. Ellen's career goal was to become a nurse. Her academic goal was to complete her degree in nursing. Ellen had hoped to find satisfaction in her work, so her personal goal was to have a career doing something she liked. At the time she thought she would enjoy being a nurse. As she learned more about her chosen career, however, Ellen's personal goal of job satisfaction was not being met. This led to her decision to change her career goal. She decided that she wanted a management-level position within a large corporation. As a result, her academic goals changed as well. Her new goals were to change her major to marketing and to complete the courses required for her degree.

What about values and ethics? Did they play a role in Ellen's goal setting? *Values* are your judgments about what is right and wrong. They are your standards of behavior, and they include reliability, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. *Ethics*, on the other hand, are community standards of behavior. Cheating in college is unethical because the college community expects students to earn their grades. Making personal calls at work or taking office supplies to use at home are unethical practices because someone else has to pay for the calls and the supplies. Employers expect you not to steal from them. Would it have been

Figure 4.3 Values That Build Character

Trustworthiness	Be honest and sincere. Don't deceive, mislead, or betray a trust. Stand up for your beliefs. Never ask a friend or colleague to do something that is wrong.
Respect	Be courteous and polite. Accept and appreciate differences. Respect others' rights to make their own decisions. Don't abuse, demean, or take advantage of others.
Responsibility	Be accountable for your actions. Think about the consequences of your behavior before you act. Don't make excuses or take credit for others' work.
Fairness	Treat all people fairly, be open-minded, and listen to opposing points of view. Don't take advantage of others' mistakes.
Caring	Show that you care about others through kindness, sharing, compassion, and empathy. Be considerate of others' feelings.
Citizenship	Play by the rules and obey the laws. Respect authority. Stay informed and vote.

Adapted from the Character Counts Coalition's "pillars of character." Appearing in Reece/Brandt, *Effective Human Relations in Organizations*, 7th edition, Houghton Mifflin Company © 1999, p. 122.

ethical for Ellen to pursue a nursing career, feeling as she did? No, because the medical community expects its workers to be dedicated. How could Ellen be dedicated to a job she didn't like? Ellen's values shaped her decision to change majors. She did not want to pursue a career in which she might not be able to live up to her employer's and patients' expectations.

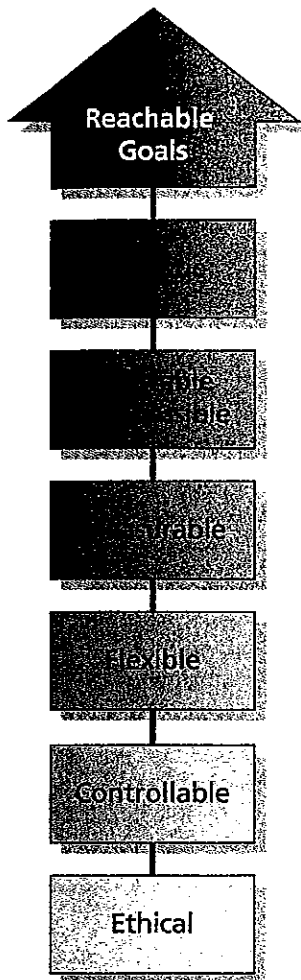
Personal values and ethical choices are not only an important part of goal setting; they influence every aspect of your life. They make up what is called "character." Character is an asset in college, at work, and in all your relations with others. Figure 4.3 lists values that build character. You can build your character by incorporating these values into your life and by considering them as you set goals.

A goal should be *reachable*, with an outcome you can expect to achieve given your skills, motivation, and values. As Figure 4.4 on page 96 shows, reachable goals have six characteristics.

1. **A reachable goal is realistic.** It is based on your abilities, interests, needs, and desires. For example, when choosing a career goal, you should consider your skills and interests. If you dislike math and dread balancing your checkbook every month, then accounting may not be a realistic career goal for you. If you like to write, have always done well in English courses, and enjoy working with others to make reports and presentations, then a career as a technical writer might be a realistic goal for you. Your college may have a career center or provide career counseling that will help you evaluate your interests so that you can consider the jobs, professions,

Figure 4.4

Six Characteristics of Reachable Goals



or public services best suited to your abilities and preferences. Career counseling can help you determine your chances for employment in specific fields. You might learn that jobs are scarce in a field you have been considering. Or you might discover a new field of interest that offers many employment opportunities.

- 2. A reachable goal is believable and possible.** You must believe that you *can* reach your goal and that it is possible to reach it within a reasonable length of time. Suppose you want to buy a DVD player. After doing some comparison shopping, you find that the price is more than you expected, and you decide to wait. You set a goal to save the money. Knowing how much money you need and how much you can afford to set aside each month, you determine that it will take five months to save the money. Each month you deposit the amount you have designated. Your goal is believable because you can afford the extra savings. Your goal is possible because you think five months is a reasonable amount of time. Your long-term goal is to save enough money to make your purchase. Each deposit you make represents the achievement of a short-term goal needed to reach the long-term goal.
- 3. A reachable goal is measurable.** Establish a time frame and a foreseeable outcome. For example, if your goal is “to make a lot of money,” decide how you are going to do it, when you are going to do it, and how much is “a lot.” Have a foreseeable outcome at the end of which you can say, “I have reached my goal.” If you set a goal to graduate from college four years from now, determine which courses to take and plan your schedule so that you can earn a sufficient number of credits each semester or quarter.
- 4. A reachable goal is flexible.** Rarely do you set a goal and follow it through to completion without any problems. In working toward your college degree, for example, you may fail or withdraw from one or more courses, or you may change majors and lose credits that have to be made up. These are temporary setbacks that may interrupt your progress but need not keep you from reaching your goal. Reassess your plan for reaching the goal; then revise it, or make a new plan. Although it may take you longer to reach your goal, it is time well spent if you are doing what you want to do.
- 5. A reachable goal is controllable.** Take charge. Set goals you can control and determine your own time limit for completing them. No one can, or should, set goals for you. Suppose you need to study for an important exam, and you know from past experience that you need at least three days to prepare yourself. Your study partner says, “We can ace this test with a four-hour study session the night before.” That strategy may work for her, but will it work for you? If your goal is to make a good grade, set up your own study schedule and stick to it. You are the best person to determine how much time you will need to prepare for a test.
- 6. A reachable goal is ethical.** It is fair to all concerned. The steps you take to reach your goal should not in any way cause you to violate rules, take advantage of others, or compromise your values. Suppose you are enrolled in a reading class that requires you to spend at least two hours a week in a learning lab practicing the skills you have learned in class. The reading class is required as a prerequisite for a composition course that is also required. You have set a short-term goal of completing the course with

a grade no lower than B. On your way to the lab, a friend says, "Let's cut today. We work on our own in there anyway. If we sign in and leave, no one will know." You know this is probably true because the lab is monitored by a technician who sends a copy of the sign-in sheet to the instructor.

What are the ethics involved in this situation? If you cut the class, you are engaging in unethical conduct for three reasons. First, you are breaking a rule. Second, you are taking advantage of your instructor by signing in and leading him or her to believe that you were present. Third, if honesty is one of your values, then you are compromising it. On the practical side, cutting lab doesn't help you reach

EXERCISE 4.2

ANALYZE ONE OF YOUR PERSONAL, academic, or work-related goals in terms of the six characteristics of reachable goals.

1. What is your goal?

2. Which of your skills and interests make this a *realistic* goal for you?

3. What makes your goal *believable* and *possible*?

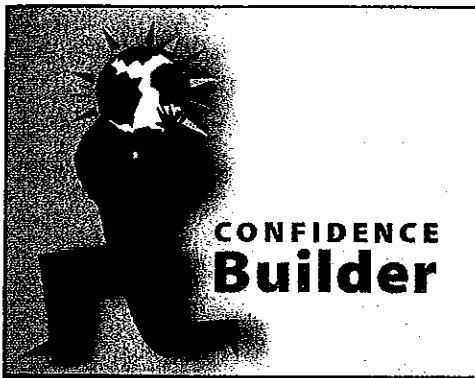
4. Is your goal *measurable*? For example, how long will it take you to reach your goal? When will you know if you have achieved it?

5. What makes your goal *flexible*? What will you do if you experience a setback?

6. Is your goal *controllable*? Is it something you can do on your own? Explain your answer.

7. Is your goal *ethical*? Explain how.

your goal. Avoiding practice time prevents your mastery of the skills and may lead to a poor grade. Is it possible to engage in unethical behavior and still reach your goals? In the short term, maybe. But in the long run, unethical conduct catches up with you. Since ethical behavior improves your chances of reaching your goals, it makes sense to say that a reachable goal is also an ethical one.



How to Develop a Positive Attitude

Changing your attitude is the first step toward solving many problems you will face in college. A negative attitude may be a habit you have developed, a characteristic response to problem solving that has prevented you from being successful in the past. Negative attitudes also affect self-esteem, destroying your confidence and creating an illusion of helplessness. But positive attitudes build confidence and self-esteem, enabling you to take control and find the motivation

to do the work necessary to achieve your goals.

As Shakespeare said, "There is nothing good nor bad but thinking makes it so." Choosing to regard a problem as a challenge casts it in a positive light, focusing your attention on the actions you can take to find solutions. Here are five more things that you can do to develop a more positive attitude.

Visualize yourself being successful. Once you have set a goal, picture in your mind what you will have or will be able to do once you reach it. Keep that picture in your mind whenever you feel negative or are concerned about mastering a skill. For example, some golf instructors advocate using visualization during practice. Golfers picture themselves making a perfect swing, then repeat the process during a game.

Control your inner voice. You talk silently to yourself all the time. If your self-talk is mainly negative and derogatory, you are programming yourself for failure. Listen for those times during studying or test taking when you say to yourself, "I can't do this," or "I'm no good at this" and counteract those negative thoughts with positive ones: "I can do this; I just need to practice more," or "I am better at this than I used to be, and I will keep improving."

Reward yourself for doing well. When you know you have done your best or when you have accomplished a short-term goal that will help you reach a long-term goal, treat yourself to a movie, a new paperback novel, or lunch with a good friend. Be sparing with these rewards and save them for when you really deserve them. What you choose as a reward doesn't matter as long as it acts as a positive reinforcement for good behavior.

Be a positive listener and speaker. If you have trouble screening your own words for negative remarks that you need to change into positive ones, listen carefully to others. When a friend says, "I'm not going to pass algebra," explore this problem with him or her. Ask your friend to think of possible solutions. Make positive suggestions such as "Why don't you get a tutor to help you with the concepts you don't understand?" Being a positive listener and speaker may help you to think more positively about your own challenges as well.

Be persistent. Persistence means continuing in spite of obstacles. Do not give up at the first setback or sign of failure. Keep trying to reach your goals. Be optimistic, seek help, and try again. Persistence will pay off, and the confidence you feel will be the reward for your effort.

To pursue this topic further, do an online search using these keywords as a starting point: *work-related attitudes, positive attitude, positive thinking.*