

Indispensable Importance of Setting Goals in College

Setting and achieving goals overall is the most underestimated skill for success in college.

The result of poor goal setting and achievement skills is low motivation, lack of direction, and performance below one's potential. The outcome is often unnecessary low grades, frustration, discouragement, and sometimes leaving college.

The ability to set and achieve goals in college is so important that without it, it's difficult, perhaps impossible, to feel motivated to and learn what's necessary to succeed or excel.

A major step in **mastering the skill of setting and achieving goals** is to understand the benefits:

1. **It specifies clearly what is to be achieved.** This is vital because it provides a direction and makes progress and achievement recognizable. Without clearly defined educational goals, it is normal for you to experience feelings of stagnation, low motivation, and lack of purpose. Clearly defined goals **provide direction.**
2. **It defines a plan of action** for the process of achieving. A plan of action provides a map, a guide, a visible pathway to goals. When there is no plan for achievement, it is normal for you to experience discouragement, succumb to distractions, or feel that aspirations are unreachable. It is very difficult to start or do well at something if you cannot see a way to achieve it. A plan of action **shows how to achieve what you desire.**
3. **It acts as a continuous progress report on how well you are doing as you move toward goals.** A progress report is vital because it provides immediate and regular feedback to help you discover if you are on or off course toward short and long-term goals. The more frequent the feedback, the sooner you discover when you have strayed from the chosen path, need to modify a plan, or are exactly on course. **Without continuous feedback** on progress towards goals, **there is no way to know how you are doing** in the process of achieving. The **definition of progress** is "movement that increases the chances of achieving something you desire". If goals have not been defined and a plan of action developed, there can be no "going forward" because there is no way to tell which way is forward. Without goals, you are like a leaves in the wind, forward is whichever way the wind happens to blow. Like a leaf in the wind, if you are without goals, you are not in control of your destiny **but someone or something else is.**
4. **It identifies exactly what is achievement or success for you.** Unless what constitutes success or achievement in college is clearly identified in terms of goals, there is no way to tell if you are making progress because without a target, there is no way to tell if you are moving toward anything, let alone toward something meaningful. **Without defining what constitutes success and achievement, you can't experience either.**

5. **It tells you when it is time to reset goals.** One of the *motivation-sapping* things you can do is not to reset new goals after one or more have been achieved. Resetting is absolutely essential if you are to maintain motivation and momentum. If resetting doesn't take place, you run the risk of feeling aimless, stagnating, and losing motivation and direction. **Resetting goals maintains motivation.**

If goals are not set, you are apt to feel like you aren't getting anywhere in college, and you are definitely not in control of your life's direction. There is much hope for students who choose to master the process of setting and achieving goals for college. The task is easy... The process for setting and achieving goals has 4 simple steps.

A 4-Step Process

But first, what is a goal?

DEFINITION OF A GOAL – choosing to pursue something you desire. This means **virtually anything** you desire can be used as a goal and becomes achievable by following the steps below.

1. **Set A Goal. It identifies something you want.** It may be pleasing parents, a new car, impressing friends, a personality trait, physical appearance, a college degree, a grade point average, a major field of study, etc. Setting a goal is also the first step in experiencing motivation.
Motivation comes from one source and one source only:
YOU are going after something that YOU want.
Unless you identify what you want, you haven't done what's necessary to feel motivation.
2. **Devise A Plan Of Action. Identify the steps or tasks** to complete that lead to your goal. These are sometimes called mini-goals that must be achieved in order to reach a larger goal. Effective plans of action have completion dates for each mini-goal that provide a timetable to determine how well you are progressing toward your larger goal.
3. **Follow Your Plan To Your Goal.** As a rule, it is easier to modify something than develop something altogether new. Follow your plan and ask: **“Am I meeting my mini-goals on time?”** Do not hesitate to add or modify mini-goals, dates, and times as you learn more about what it takes to reach your larger goal.
4. **Reset Goals.** Goals must be reset after they are achieved if you are to continue to feel motivation. Goal setting and achieving is a *lifelong process* for those wishing continuous success. When resetting goals cease, achieving stops. Stagnation, aimlessness, and frustration take over as motivation fades.

Like anything that is repeated often enough, becomes a habitual. Setting, achieving, and resetting goals can become a habit and so can achieving success if you choose to do what is necessary to achieve goals and become successful.



Student Academic Resource Center



This is why there are different degrees of success among various people. If you are willing to master the process for setting and achieving goals, you are one of the few who chooses to do what it takes to be successful and to make success a habit.