

# Setting SMART+ Goals in Grad School

Example Guide for Goal Setting in Academic Research

## Specify your goal

What will be accomplished? What actions will you take? Consider the who, what, when, where, which, and why. Specify an action: oversee, coordinate, supervise, manage, plan, support, transition, update, upgrade, develop, create, implement, evaluation, produce, write, process, provide, maintain, reconcile, direct, administer, brainstorm, develop.

## Make Measurable Metrics

How will you measure progress? Metrics can be direct (the project will be complete when a pull request is made) or indirect/a proxy (the skill will be learned when I can, without using Stack Overflow, write a Kalman filter from scratch); metrics can also be quantitative or qualitative.

## Achieve

What tools do you already have in place to achieve your goal? What obstacles can you foresee and how will you overcome them?

## Relevance

How does this goal fit in with your larger goals/motivations in grad school? Is this important for your thesis? For your development as a researcher? A requirement set out by your adviser? What is its priority for you? What will achieving this goal allow you to do in the future?

## Time-Bound

How long will this take you to accomplish? Set a deadline, and back up that deadline with external motivators (e.g., paper deadline) or evidence-based indicators (e.g., a similar task took me 3 weeks last time or my adviser suggests this will take 10 hours so I'm going to multiply that by 3). If the timing feels ambitious, consider why and whether this goal needs to be adjusted or whether there are obstacles that need to be removed.

## Consider Your Context (Plus)

How will you hold yourself accountable to your goals? What strategies will you use to watch your progress day-to-day? Are there other activities you're up to that will require strategizing around? Do you have collaborators, and are they on the same page about this goal? Add your goal to the timeline below!