



From Dreams to Reality

Goal Setting tools to help make your dreams come true

A Goal Is A Dream With A Deadline – Napoleon Hill

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Make It Black and White

Vague Goals Produce Vague Results~~ Jack Canfield

We all know what goals are. But what, exactly, is a vague goal? One that doesn't clearly define the results you want. To sell a book is a great goal, but it's not specific. This goal covers everything from self-publishing a how-to on building a steam engine, to selling a book here and a book there to different publishing houses in a variety of sub-genres. So be specific.

Specific, but not inflexible. You don't want to cheat yourself of a goal. For instance, when I started writing, my goal was specific – to sell to Harlequin Temptation. I studied both writing and the Temptation line, wrote, honed my craft and submitted. Then I wrote another one, used the feedback I received on the first and wrote yet another while I waited. And then the Temptation line closed. If my goal had only been to sell to Temptation, my journey would have been finished then and there. Instead, I made a quick adjustment, studied the lines and focused on Blaze, where I made my first sale.

A fun tool to help you narrow down your goal is to try and picture it. If you're a visual person, close your eyes and imagine the goal. See it in your mind as if it's happened already – for instance, see yourself in the bookstore watching people buy your book off the shelf. See yourself winning major writing awards, your name on the NY Times Best Seller list. Whatever your goal is, see it in your mind. If you're not visual, imagine how it will feel, bring in the emotions and excitement you'll experience when it happens.

Once you've narrowed down your goal, honed it and made sure this is exactly what you want- the best thing to do is write it down. Writing goals empowers them. It gives that extra boost that takes them from a wish to a determined path you plan to take. One famous study from Yale in 1953 said that the 3% of Yale graduates who had written goals had more wealth years later than the other 97% of the class combined.

Where you write them is totally up to you! You can type them up in a computer file, you can create a goal book and note them there. Experts say that handwritten goals and affirmations carry more weight because they involve more of your body's focus and effort, but the key is to write the goal and keep track of it.

I've included a handy worksheet here for you to jot down your goals. You can use this to narrow down your ideas, then transfer it later to whatever tracking system you decide on (personally, I love my goal book, it's pretty and each year I get to go back and see how many goals I achieved). Or if you'd like, print out the worksheets and put them in a binder. It's all about whatever works for you!



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List your 3 Major Goals

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Notes:

Break It Down

Shoot for the moon, even if you miss, you'll land amongst the stars ~~ Les Brown

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time, right? Okay, so none of us are going to be eating elephants anytime soon, but you get the picture. So many of our goals are HUGE. Let's face it, the process of selling a book, or losing 10 (or more) pounds, or getting out of midlist are not one shot deals. They take work, and the easiest way to do the work is to break it down into smaller, manageable steps.

Say your goal is to sell a book. Here are the steps I'd personally use to break this goal down. Your steps might vary, of course.

- Choose a genre/sub-genre.
 - Research what sub-genres are selling in Romance
 - Analyze my own writing to see where my voice and style fits
 - Investigate which houses/editors are buying and what their requirements are
 - Consider ways to make THIS book stand out, or be different from all the others already doing well in this sub-genre or currently being submitted
- Plot/outline/pantz the book
 - Because I'm a plotter, I always start with a plotting party and create an outline. Pantzers would probably just dive in.
- Create a writing schedule
 - Make it a livable schedule. Writing, like exercise, is something that's best done on a steady, regular basis.
 - Create benchmarks for the schedule to keep myself encouraged and focused
 - Add rewards – chocolate is always good
- Write
 - And write some more
 - And write even more
 - And keep writing
- Get feedback
 - Could be via Critique groups or partners, contests or editor/agent
- Revise if necessary
- Submit
 - Go back to that list you investigated, and submit to as many houses/agents as you feel comfortable with
 - Use an feedback received from submissions, then submit some more
- Start a new book

Always, always start a new book.

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Breaking It Down, continued

This same breakdown process can be applied to any goals, from going back to school to losing weight. Isabel Santos, my heroine in my January 2008 Blaze, DOES SHE DARE? applied this exact same process to get herself a man!

The key is to look at your goal and figure out how to make it manageable. For some people, the breakdown would be bigger steps (Write, submit, Write, submit) for others the steps might be broken down even more. Everyone will have a slightly different method, of course, but the advantages of breaking your big goals into smaller steps are many:

- You can easily track where you are on the road to making that dream into a reality.
- If you find yourself frustrated with what seems a lack of progress, you can pinpoint where you need to focus (ie: submissions not getting good responses? Go back to step one and research your sub-genre again to figure out why yours doesn't fit. Or possibly get more through contests or critiques to see what area you can work on improving)
- Smaller steps can help keep you from feeling overwhelmed by a huge goal, and also help keep away feelings of discouragement at the length of time it sometimes takes to achieve the big picture goal.
- There are a lot more reasons to celebrate when you take it in small steps –and celebrations are one of the best ways to stay encouraged and focused on the big picture!

Put it on the Clock

*There is no scarcity of opportunity to make a living at what you love;
there's only scarcity of resolve to make it happen. ~~ Wayne Dyer*

A goal needs a timeframe. This is actually one of the most important steps in goal setting. Without a “when” to be done by, it’s just a lovely idea you want to happen ‘someday’. Once you put a ‘due-by’ date on the wish, then it’s a goal.

So – how do you put it on the clock? First of all, look at your goal and ask yourself what the big picture due date is. For me, I had a goal to sell by 2005. Of course, I always HOPED it would happen earlier, but that was my deadline. (I sold in May 2006, which I’ll cover in the last step, ALWAYS HAVE A BACKUP). To decide on this deadline, I did a little research and found that on average (AVERAGE – again, mileage will vary) many writers took 4 years of serious writing to sell their first book. Kinda like college, right? I figured I was serious and I was doing everything I could to make it happen (ie: I was working the steps I’d broken down, taking classes & workshops, using feedback, submitting). Because selling a book is such a huge step, I’d actually factored in a number of smaller accomplishments I wanted to accomplish as well, such as finaling in local contests and the Golden Heart.

So what kind of time frame will you put on your goals? First decide what your deadline is for the big goal, then work backward. You’ve already broken them down into steps – look at each step and ask yourself when is a reasonable time to have it done. Reasonable is the key here... If you’re working full-time with kids to run here and there, you might not have as much time to focus on writing as someone with fewer commitments. If you’ve already sold and are trying to reach the next level, you’ll have to factor in current writing and promotional deadlines. Real life is less intrusive if you make allowances for it in the beginning. Give yourself time for holidays and family commitments. Realize that some things are out of your hands, like editor response times. You want your timeframe to be realistic, but still challenging.

Once you’ve set your deadlines, be sure to read your goals regularly. Keep your calendar where you can see it. Don’t put it in a drawer and forget it, or you’ll lose that building momentum of energy to help you make it come true. If you miss a deadline, revisit how that will affect the big picture, ask yourself what elements factored in (was it because you just didn’t feel like writing, or was it because you were in the hospital? Was it because you waffled on submitting or was it because the editor was backlogged and took 9 months to get back to you instead of the standard 5?) Keep these elements in mind if you revise the deadlines. They’re great tools to help you realize if the goal is one you really want bad enough to work for... or just liked the sound of.



2008 Timeline

List what you want to have accomplished each month according to your breakdown

	Goal #1	Goal #2	Goal #3
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			

It's All About Support

Keep away from those who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you believe that you too can become great. ~~ Mark Twain

We might dream alone, but dreams are easier to achieve with support. Friends, colleagues, family. Everyone you deal with will play a part in your goal achievements. They'll help you; build your confidence, give you support and believe in you, offer feedback and ideas. Or they'll tear you down; not respecting your time or when you say no, offering passive-aggressive (or all out aggressive) comments that chip away at your confidence, or belittle your dream.

Take a look around and ask yourself which camp the people closest to you fall. Do they make you feel good? Like you can catch the moon? Or do they make you doubt your chances or feel unworthy? Your support team is all about the people who make you feel great. People who help you feel like you CAN have all your dreams come true. These are the ones you want to share your goals with, to enlist for support. It could be a critique partner, a weight loss buddy, a family member or teacher. It could be one person or ten.

This is your team, who do you want on it? Once you've decided, go talk to them. Tell them about your goals, share your timeframe and breakdown steps. Let them know what they can do to help you see this dream come true. In return, maybe you can do the same for them. I have a goal-setting partner and we rock at keeping each other motivated and on track.

Once you've decided who, among the people you know, you want on your team, ask yourself what's missing. Do you have a great cheering section, but need help honing your craft? Perhaps you'd like a mentor on your team, or a series of workshop instructors who can help you grow and encourage you. If your goal is weight loss, maybe you need someone to workout with? Or maybe an online buddy that you can share your diet journal with and be kept accountable.

Think about it –and even if the perfect person to fill that empty team spot isn't already in your life, just keep an eye out. Once you define the job description, you'll be amazed at how fast you find someone to fill it.

Always remember two things, though.

1. Support is a two-way street.
2. No team in the world can make our dreams come true for us – only we have that power.

The bottom line is we have to support and believe in ourselves. We are the team captain and everyone will take their cues from how dedicated WE are to motivating ourselves toward our goals. We're the ones with the most at stake, after all. Because if we give up, we're the ones who pay the price. Excuses might let you off the hook with others, but the bottom line is when you give up on your dream, you're the one who loses.



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Support Team

Who's on YOUR team?

List each team member's name, their support role & how you'll ask for their help with these goals

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Always Have a Backup

Stay committed to your decisions, but stay flexible in your approach ~~ Tony Robbins

Reality is a tricky thing, and even when we're doing it all right, our goals can still be derailed. The trick is not to give up. When I first started writing, I'd hoped to sell to Harlequin Temptation. I was really close to making that happen when the line closed. Ack! I had to regroup, rethink my goal. I refocused and shifted my breakdown goal steps to my new goal – sell to Harlequin Blaze. My original big goal was to sell by the end of 2005. That was a reasonable timeframe. I did all the right stuff. Took the workshops, entered the contests, listened to the feedback and did all I could to improve my writing craft. And here came the end of 2005 and I hadn't achieved my goal. Was it time to give up? I looked at my goals there on the index card tacked next to my monitor and I had to decide... How reasonable was the dream? Was I on track? Were there indications that it COULD come true if I kept working? Definitely. Did I want the dream or didn't I? Of course I did, so I revised my timeline and stuck it out. Five months later I sold to my dream editor.

When your goal shifts, regroup. Take into account your big picture and ask yourself how you can still have it. If your goal is to sell to a specific editor and that editor leaves publishing, how can you adjust? Find a new editor, of course. If your goal is to lose 30 pounds before your class reunion, and even though you've done your best, suddenly the reunion is next week and you've only lost 15, realize you still look better and are healthier than you were 15 pounds ago (and go shop for some gorgeous clothes to show off your progress). Then revise your timeline and keep working until you lose that next 15.

The key to making your dreams into reality is to stay flexible. Like any good writer knows, revision is a part of the process. That goes for your goals, too.

You might find you need to change the goal. Maybe the paranormal market is dead and you have to decide if you want to focus on historical or the suddenly revitalized romantic comedy. If your major goal is to become a published, working author, then these revisions are easily (okay, maybe not so easily) integrated.

You might find you need to revise your timeline. Or the steps might have to be reconsidered. Be open to change. Even if you don't actively focus on your goals on a daily or weekly basis (by this I don't mean you don't work toward achieving the goals, I simply mean you don't read your goal list and check your calendar to see if you're on track) checking in quarterly is a great idea. You'll be surprised to find how much you have achieved, and might need to rewrite some goals or steps because you can already check them off the list.

If your dreams are worth having, they are worth making a reality.

Recommended Reading

(In no particular order)

The Success Principals – Jack Canfield

Awaken the Giant Within – Tony Robbins

Unlimited Power – Tony Robbins

You'll See It When You Believe It – Wayne Dyer

Real Magic – Wayne Dyer

The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success – Deepak Chopra

The War of Art – Steven Pressfield

The Secret – Rhonda Byrne

The Key – Joe Vitale

The Seven Principles of Success – Stephen Covey