

"A goal properly set is halfway reached." —Zig Ziglar

Changing habits to increase physical activity is no small undertaking, and making the decision to be more active is just the first step. Actively thinking about and planning for exercise will help prepare you for the process and motivate you to stay on track.

When you're ready to make any lifestyle change, it is helpful to set tangible goals. These goals can be short-term (daily, weekly, monthly) or long-term (6–12 months). When goal setting, it's also helpful to set goals that are SMART—specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. The table below lists some examples of SMART goals for exercise.

SMART Goal Component	Example
<p>Specific State the desired outcome as explicitly as possible, and target a specific area for improvement. This is the "who, what, where, when, which, and why" of your goal.</p>	I will ride my bike to work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week.
<p>Measurable Identify the ways in which you will track your progress, and be as specific as possible. This is the "how" of your goal.</p>	I will walk at least five days per week (for 20 minutes) in the evenings to lower my cholesterol.
<p>Attainable Start with small, achievable goals that are easily outlined into specific steps that will enable you to complete the goal. Then, as you meet those smaller goals, work up to intermediate goals and goals that are more difficult to achieve.</p>	I will walk for 15 minutes three days a week at lunch, increasing my time each week by five minutes until I reach 30 minutes per day. I will add an extra day every two to four weeks until I reach 30 minutes of walking five days a week.
<p>Realistic Create a goal that you are both willing and able to accomplish.</p>	I will stretch for 5 minutes before bedtime, followed by 5 minutes of breath work, which will help me fall asleep faster each night.
<p>Timely Set a deadline or time for achieving your goal to help keep you motivated.</p>	I will run a 5k by September 15th.

To begin setting your own SMART goals, fill in the information in the template provided on the next page.

SMART Goals for exercise

Date: _____

Name: _____

SMART Goals are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely

SMART Goals for Exercise	What smaller steps or sub-goals can be created to help me achieve this goal?	What obstacles could get in the way of achieving this goal? How will I address these challenges?	What is the start date, timeframe, or deadline for taking action?

References

1. American Council on Exercise. The science supporting the stages of change model. Coaching Behavior Change. 2nd ed. San Diego, CA: American Council on Exercise; 2019: 46-57.
2. Bailey R. Goal Setting and Action Planning for Health Behavior Change. *Am J Lifestyle Med.* 2017;13(6):615-618. doi:10.1177/1559827617729634

