

Activity 1

Look at the examples of goals below and choose the ones that are good examples of specific, relevant, and realistic goals. For the ones you didn 't choose, explain why.

- _____ I want to speak better in English this week.
- _____ I want to eliminate my accent this week.
- _____ I want to improve my pronunciation of the "th" sound this week.
- _____ I want to improve my grammar.
- _____ I want to finish working through Azar's "Fundamentals of English Grammar."
- _____ I want to master the present perfect tense this week.
- _____ I want to start my own business.
- _____ I want to finish all of the paperwork I need to start my own business.
- _____ I want to read and understand the application for a business licence from the Government of Manitoba website.
- _____ I want to learn the process for starting my own business.

Activity 2

Read the descriptions of the following students and their needs. Choose the goal for each one that will be the most effective in meeting their needs.

Nadia:

I work at an insurance company. I can do my job effectively with my current level of English, but when I 'm in the lunch room, I fall silent. It sounds like my colleagues are speaking another language...it certainly doesn 't sound like English! What goal should I set?

- a) I want to learn the vocabulary I need to fill out insurance policies for clients.
- b) I want to learn about informal English so I can talk with colleagues.
- c) I want to learn four common informal reduction rules in English so I can talk with colleagues.

Wei Ming:

I have three children in elementary school. My oldest child has a parent-teacher conference coming up soon, and it 's mandatory for me to attend. However, I don 't know what happens at these conferences, and so I don 't know what I will need to talk about. What goal should I set?

- a) I want to ask a neighbour about what I can expect during a parent-teacher conference.
- b) I want to practise formal English so I don 't offend the teacher with plain language.
- c) I want to learn school-related idioms so I can use them during the conference.

Activity 2 Continued...

Read the descriptions of the following students and their needs. Choose the goal for each one that will be the most effective in meeting their needs.

Priya:

I came to Canada because I want to be a filmmaker. I filled out a grant proposal, and mailed it away. Now, the Arts Council of Canada has sent me an acceptance letter! I 'm very happy, and I want to thank them. However, I don 't know how to do this in a culturally acceptable way: Do I send money? Do I buy them a small gift? Do I send a letter? Do I do nothing? What goal should I set?

- a) I want to learn how to write a letter of thanks.
- b) I want to call a colleague to make an inquiry.
- c) I want to learn how to write a script in English.

Ederlyn

I have a job I love, and I speak conversational English well. I love to go to the movies with my English-speaking friends and talk about the films over coffee, but I feel like I say " It was so good! " way too often. What goal should I set?

- a) I want to learn formal English so I can advance at work.
- b) I want to learn 8 vocabulary words and expressions to talk about movies.
- c) I want to learn the names of current movies.



Activity 3

Choose one of the following questions. Reflect on your answer; then write a short answer.

- 1) In what other situations do you set goals that must be specific, relevant and realistic? You might think of retirement savings, planning a vacation, etc. How important is planning in these situations? What would happen if you didn ' t plan?

- 2) Do you agree that setting goals is an important first step in studying English? Why or why not?

- 3) Can you think of goals you ' ve set in the past? Did you achieve these goals or not? Why do you think that you were successful or not successful? Was your goal realistic, specific, and relevant? If you were setting those goals again today, what would you do differently?

Activity 1 ANSWER KEY

Look at the examples of goals below and choose the ones that are good examples of specific, relevant, and realistic goals. For the ones you didn't choose, explain why.

- _____ I want to speak better in English this week.
This goal is ineffective because it's not SPECIFIC: how will you know if you speak better English by the end of the week?
- _____ I want to eliminate my accent this week.
This goal is ineffective because it's not REALISTIC: it's difficult for adult learners to completely eliminate their accents. Plus, most English speakers find foreign accents charming and attractive: why would you want to eliminate yours?
- __X__ I want to improve my pronunciation of the "th" sound this week.
- _____ I want to improve my grammar.
This goal is ineffective because it's not SPECIFIC: what grammar do you want to improve: verb tense usage? Personal pronouns? Word order? Choose one aspect and master it before going on to another.
- _____ I want to finish working through Azar's "Fundamentals of English Grammar."
This goal is ineffective because it's not RELEVANT: many native speakers would struggle to complete this book, never mind in a week! Also, would you remember everything once you finished? A better strategy would be to choose one specific grammar point that you struggle with, work on it, complete some exercises, then practise it in the real world!
- __X__ I want to master the present perfect tense this week.
- _____ I want to start my own business.
This goal is ineffective because it's not SPECIFIC: "starting a business" involves a series of steps. A better goal might be to visit a website or talk to someone who can describe the process to you.
- __X__ I want to finish all of the paperwork I need to start my own business.
- __X__ I want to read and understand the application for a business licence from the Government of Manitoba website.
- __X__ I want to learn the process for starting my own business.

Activity 2 ANSWER KEY

Read the descriptions of the following students and their needs. Choose the goal for each one that will be the most effective in meeting their needs.

Nadia:

- a) I want to learn the vocabulary I need to fill out insurance policies for clients. (not relevant)
- b) I want to learn about informal English so I can talk with colleagues. (not realistic)
- c) I want to learn four common informal reduction rules in English so I can talk with colleagues.**

Wei Ming:

- a) I want to ask a neighbour about what I can expect during a parent-teacher conference.**
- b) I want to practise formal English so I don ' t offend the teacher with plain language. (not relevant)
- c) I want to learn school-related idioms so I can use them during the conference. (not specific)

Priya:

- a) I want to learn how to write a letter of thanks. (not relevant, yet)
- b) I want to call a colleague to make an inquiry.**
- c) I want to learn how to write a script in English. (not relevant)

Ederlyn

- a) I want to learn formal English so I can advance at work. (not specific or relevant)
- b) I want to learn 8 vocabulary words and expressions to talk about movies.**
- c) I want to learn the names of current movies. (not relevant)