

GOAL SETTING FOR FRESH GRADUATES

First step towards a Successful Career

-By Mr. Arshad Mahmood Akif

What is goal-setting?

“Goal setting” is the process of defining specific objectives or targets that a graduate wants to achieve within a certain timeframe. This is like driving your motorcycle, going to a certain place, or hitting a football toward the post goalpost. It is simply knowing the direction and spotting the point's endpoint.

There are three types of goal-setting: process, performance, and outcome goals.

1. Process goals: These are specific actions in a sequence of actions. For example, aim to study for 2 hours after dinner every day.
2. Performance goals: These are based on personal standards. For example, aim to achieve a 3.5 GPA. Personal goals are mostly controllable.
3. Outcome goals: These are based on outcome. For a fresh graduate, landing a job at a particular place of employment. Outcome goals are very difficult to control because of other outside influences.

Why should I set goals?

Goal setting is an important aspect of personal and professional development as it provides direction, motivation, and focus to work towards desired outcomes.

Goals also help in measuring progress as we continue to work. Setting goals holds us accountable for our actions. People say that not having your own goals means working towards the goals of others.

Goal-Setting Mechanism

Goal-setting mechanisms are techniques or systems used to establish, track, and achieve goals effectively. There are many ways to set goals, but the SMART goals approach is popular because it is simple to do.

One can easily follow this technique for setting SMART goals.

There are many other mechanisms, and one can choose according to the requirements .

- OKRs (Objectives and Key Results): OKRs define objectives and the key results that measure progress towards those objectives for specific period.
- KPIs (Key Performance Indicators): These are quantifiable measures that track progress towards goals. KPIs help ensure that efforts align with objectives and provide a way to assess performance.
- SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats): This framework helps in identifying internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, which can inform goal setting and strategy development.
- Backward Goal Setting: This approach involves starting with the end goal in mind and working backward to determine the steps needed to achieve it.

Aligning Personal and Family Goals

A fresh graduate has a long life ahead of him or her. Though we can imagine events in life according to our goals, many areas and aspects of life are yet unknown. Therefore, one must set goals considering family life, especially parents.

Success is not just achieving commercial goals; a balanced life must be a goal. So that maintains a balance between professional and family life without allowing professional life to disturb or affect family life.

Aligning family goals with professional goals involves a deep and sincere thought process.

These steps can help with your alignment task.

- Open Communication: Start by having



Mr. Arshad Mahmood Akif

Trainer, Entrepreneur, HRM Expert & CEO of ASK Development

Mr. Akif is an HRD Professional, consultant, and entrepreneur with 20 years of experience in corporate and development sectors in the fields of Human Resource Management, Management and Leadership, HR outsourcing, youth development and employment, and soft skills. Mr. Akif is a member of ISO-260, in two international working groups on recruitment and Diversity and Inclusion. Also, member of the “National Mirror Committee” of PSQCA, Pakistan on HRM Standards Development.

	S	Specific: The goal must be very specific and grounded in something that's significant to you.
	M	Measurable: The goal must have some sort of measurement (days, pounds, miles, etc.).
	A	Achievable: The goal must be realistic and reasonable.
	R	Relevant: The goal must relate to what you're hoping to accomplish.
	T	Time-bound: The goal must have a timeframe and that timeframe must be reasonable.



open and honest conversations with your family members about your professional goals and aspirations.

- **Identify shared values and priorities** within your family. Discuss how your professional goals can align with these values and contribute to the overall well-being and happiness of your family members.
- **Set Mutual Goals:** Collaboratively set goals that benefit both your career and your family life. For example, if your career goal involves pursuing higher education, discuss how this decision can also benefit your family in the long run, such as through increased earning potential or job satisfaction.
- **Establish Boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries between work and family life to ensure that one does not overshadow the other. Set aside dedicated time for family activities, relaxation, and personal time, and communicate these boundaries to your employer and colleagues.
- **Support each other:** Offer support and encouragement to family members in pursuit of their own goals and aspirations. Recognize that everyone's goals may require sacrifices and compromises at times, and be willing to work together to find solutions that benefit the entire family.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** Recognize that circumstances may change over time and be willing to adjust your plans accordingly while keeping the needs and desires of your family in mind.

Challenges of Goal Setting

Setting goals as a fresh graduate in Pakistan can be both exciting and frightening. Here are some common challenges you might face:

- **Uncertainty about Career Path:** Many fresh graduates in Pakistan may be unsure about which career path to pursue. Take time to explore your interests, strengths, and values through internships, volunteering, or informational interviews. Seek guidance from mentors or career counselors to help you make informed decisions.
- **Lack of experience:** Limited exposure can

make it challenging to set realistic goals. Start by setting short-term goals that are achievable within a few months to a year.

- **Financial Constraints:** Economic conditions in Pakistan may pose financial challenges for fresh graduates. Consider setting financial goals such as managing student loan repayments (if any), creating a budget, and saving for future expenses. Look for job opportunities or consider freelance work to supplement your income.
- **Limited Job Market:** The job market in Pakistan may be competitive, particularly in certain industries. Set realistic career goals by researching job market trends, identifying in-demand skills, and tailoring your qualifications accordingly. Consider alternative career paths or explore opportunities in emerging industries.
- **Overcoming Setbacks:** Setbacks are an inevitable part of life. You may face unexpected situations or people who disappoint you. Stay close to friends and family who can encourage you during challenging times.

What to Avoid While Setting Goals

Effective goal-setting involves more than just deciding what you want to achieve. It also requires avoiding certain pitfalls that can reduce your chances of success.

Here are some common mistakes to avoid in goal-setting:

- **Avoid setting goals that are too broad or vague,** such as “get in shape” or “find a better job.”
- **Setting ambitious goals that are unrealistic or unattainable** can lead to frustration.
- **Failing to write a clear, time-bound plan of action** for achieving your goals can cause aimless efforts and wasted time.
- **Trying to pursue too many goals simultaneously** can spread your focus thin and dilute your efforts.
- **Failure to expect and plan for potential obstacles and challenges** can derail your progress toward your goals.
- **Not taking responsibility for personal goals and blaming others for failures.**

- **Being too rigid in your goal-setting approach** can limit your flexibility and creativity.
- **Pursuing goals relentlessly without taking time for self-care** can lead to burnout and diminished well-being.

By avoiding these common pitfalls, you can increase your chances of success and achieve your aspirations more effectively.

A Balanced Approach to Goal Setting

A balanced approach to goal setting for a fresh graduate involves setting goals that address various aspects of life, including career, personal development, relationships, and well-being. Here's how you can adopt a balanced approach:

- **Set specific career goals** related to your desired job role, industry, or field of interest.
- **Prioritize goals related to personal growth and skill development.** This could involve gaining new skills or certifications relevant to your field, improving communication or leadership abilities, or enhancing your critical thinking skills.
- **Set realistic financial goals** to ensure financial stability and independence.
- **Prioritize goals related to physical and mental well-being** as well. This means adopting a healthy lifestyle, such as exercising regularly, eating nutritious meals, and getting enough sleep.
- **Allocate time and energy to nurture relationships** with family, friends, mentors, and colleagues.
- **Do some volunteer work or use your skills to mentor others.**
- **Make time for hobbies, interests, and activities** that bring you joy and relaxation.
- **Embrace a mindset of lifelong learning** and set goals to continue expanding your knowledge and expertise.

Remember that goal-setting is a continuous process, and it's okay to adjust your goals as circumstances change. Stay determined, keep going, and take the initiative in pursuing your goals, and you'll be on track to achieving success as a recent graduate.