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Setting Goals for Your Money

A “goal” is a purpose. It’s something to aim for. A goal can point you in the direction you want to take.

A good place to start is thinking about what’s important to you. You can set goals for your health, your habits, your work, your education, or for your family. Once you know your goal, you can decide how to move forward.

What makes a strong goal?

- It says *specifically* **what** you want.
- It says **when** you want it.
- It says **why** you want it.
- It says **how much** you need.
- It is **written down** (think about carrying a picture of your goal in your wallet or posting it on the refrigerator).

What if I have a BIG goal?

Big goals can be easier if you break them down into some smaller goals, to be tackled one at a time. As you meet each small step, you will be building confidence, motivation, and a good track record.

When you have a money goal, it’s helpful to think about how long it might take to reach it because not many of us can come up with a pile of money overnight.

- Goals to meet in the next few months are called **short-term goals**. Short-term money goals might be saving for the holidays, opening a bank account, or checking your credit report.
- **Medium-term goals** can take a year or two to meet. They take more patience and planning. Some medium-term money goals might be paying off the car, going back to school, or finding a different place to live.
- A money goal that will take more than a couple of years is a **long-term goal**. Long-term money goals could be having a down payment on a house, saving for a child’s education, or saving for retirement. Long-term goals can be challenging because it’s so easy to put off getting started because “there’s always tomorrow.”



What if I have more goals than money?

To get to your medium and long-term money goals, you may need to give up something you want right now so you can get something even better in the future.

Besides having too many goals at once, other reasons people might not meet their goals are:

- The goal is out of reach for the amount of time and money available
- Another goal took priority
- The goal is too broad or unclear

How can I increase my chances for success?

Think back to something you needed or wanted in the past.

- How did you get there?
- What support did you need?
- Who helped you reach that goal?
- How did it feel when you got there?

Consider what worked for you in the past, what road blocks came up and how you handled them, and what you learned from that experience.

Be sure to celebrate your success along the way, like when you open a savings account or cut \$20 from your spending.

What else do I need to succeed?

For More Information...

Visit our website for more financial education resources.

finances.extension.wisc.edu/

Contact your local Extension Educator:

counties.extension.wisc.edu/

For help with balancing your monthly spending plan, contact the nonprofit National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) at www.nfcc.org/ or 800.388.2227.

Before you set your money goals, it's helpful to talk about plans, dreams, and values with your family and friends. Having a conversation with those who are close to you can help them understand what you want to do and why. Your friends and family are much more likely to support you if they know why your goals are important to you.

If you have children at home, this may be a good time to talk with them about **needs** (things required to live like food, shelter, transportation) and **wants** (extras that make life more fun and comfortable, or things they'd like to have but that aren't necessary to survive). Needs and wants are different for every person and for every family.

If you begin with the end in mind, you will have a great head start on the goals you want to reach!

To \$um It Up:

- \$ You are more likely to meet your goals when you work on only *one* or *two* at a time.
- \$ Too many goals mean you have less money, less time, and less energy to put toward any of them.
- \$ Share your goals with family and friends and ask for their support.
- \$ People who write down their goals are much more likely to reach them.
- \$ If you don't plan where you want to go, you may not like where you end up.

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