A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Your Goal Blueprint

Nine simple, research-backed steps to choose goals that matter, plan them well and actually finish them.



www.forwardstepsblog.com

Wishing won't build it.
A blueprint will.

Decide what matters, map the steps, then keep moving, one small win at a time.



FRAME IT AS A START

58.9%

of people with "start doing" resolutions succeeded a year on, vs 47.1% with "stop doing" ones

Oscarsson et al., PLOS ONE, 2020



SETTING GOALS WORKS

141

studies found setting a goal changes behavior, most of all when it's challenging and made public

Epton, Currie & Armitage, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 2017



USE A FRESH START

33.4%

higher odds of a gym visit at the start of a new week. Fresh starts give goals a natural push.

Dai, Milkman & Riis, Management Science, 2014



HOW THIS GUIDE WORKS

Three parts, nine steps

PART 1

1

Decide what matters

Decide, match your values, define success.

PART 2

2

Build the blueprint

Write it, work backward, plan for bumps.

PART 3

3

Keep it moving

Track it, reward it, learn and adjust.



1

Decide what matters

Choose goals that truly fit you and your life.



STEP 1 · DECIDE WHAT MATTERS

Make the decision

Every meal you've eaten started with a decision. Goals work the same way. A dream stays a wish until you decide to act on it.

> **Nothing changes until you decide it will. Then everything can.**

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Say it out loud: "I'm doing this."
- ✓ Write today's date next to your goal. That's day one.



10:00

STEP 2 · DECIDE WHAT MATTERS

Start with values

Draw a line down a page. List your values on the left and your top five goals on the right. Then draw lines to connect them.

MY VALUES		MY GOALS
Health	→	Run a 5K
Family	→	Sunday dinners
Freedom	→	Start a side gig

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Think health, family, money, growth and fun.
- ✓ A goal with no line to a value may not really be yours.



WHY IT WORKS

Yours

Goals that fit your own interests and values get more lasting effort, and are reached more often.

Sheldon & Elliot, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1999



STEP 3 · DECIDE WHAT MATTERS

Define success

Money and titles don't fit everyone. Decide what progress looks like for you: more free time, better health, or more time with family.

INSTEAD OF



Measuring yourself by income, titles or someone else's timeline

TRY



Defining progress in your own words: time, health, calm, people

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Spend 10 minutes writing what progress feels like to you.
- ✓ Drop one outside yardstick you judge yourself by.



2

Build the blueprint

Turn a big dream into a clear, written plan.





1. ✍️ Name the goal in one clear line
2. 💛 Add a value word that moves you
3. 🌱 Frame it as something to start

STEP 4 · BUILD THE BLUEPRINT

Write it down

A mental note isn't a plan. Write one clear goal statement using words from your values, framed as something you'll start doing.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ "Start walking after dinner" beats "stop sitting so much."
- ✓ Keep it in a notebook you'll open every day.



STEP 5 · BUILD THE BLUEPRINT

Work backward

Far-off dreams are easy to put off. Start at the finish line and work back to yearly, monthly and weekly milestones.

TRY IT TODAY

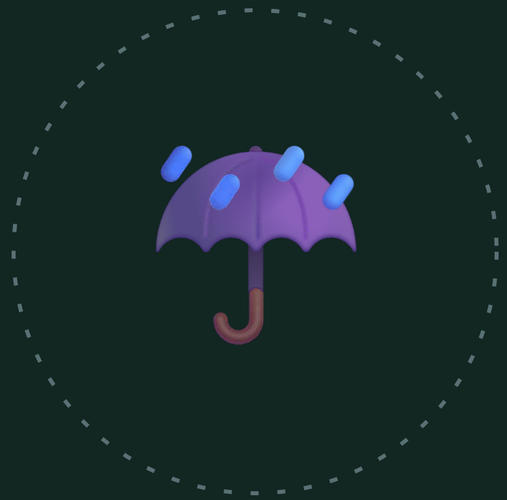
- ✓ Make this week's milestone small enough to finish.
- ✓ Launch it on a fresh start: a Monday or the 1st.





Write the plan down

List likely obstacles



Pick a plan B

Breaks with an end

Expect bumps. Plan for them now.

STEP 6 · BUILD THE BLUEPRINT

Plan for the bumps

Setbacks are as certain as bad weather. You can't stop the storm, but you can prepare. List likely obstacles and a plan B for each.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Ask: what's most likely to knock me off track?
- ✓ If you need a break, set the day it ends.

WHY IT WORKS

60%+

more practice questions done by teens who spent 30 minutes picturing their goal, its obstacles and a plan

Duckworth et al., Educational Psychology, 2011



3

Keep it moving

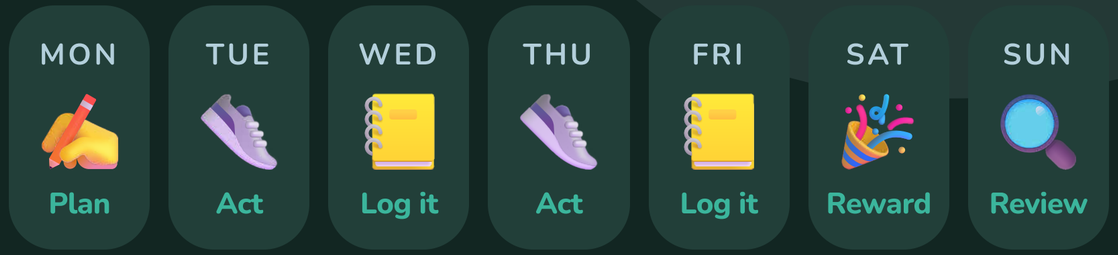
Small, steady wins carry you all the way.



STEP 7 · KEEP IT MOVING

Track it daily

Keep a progress journal. Each day, note one action you took and how it went. You'll soon see what works best.



A few lines a day shows how far you've come.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Two lines a day is plenty.
- ✓ Look back each week and do more of what worked.





Fancy coffee



New book



Long bath



Park walk



New playlist



Movie night

STEP 8 · KEEP IT MOVING

Reward small wins

Break your goal into mini-goals. Cross each one off and give yourself a small reward. Feeling progress keeps your spirits high.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Pick the reward before you start the mini-goal.
- ✓ Keep rewards small and in line with your goal.



STEP 9 · KEEP IT MOVING

Learn and adjust

A setback isn't a stop sign. It shows you what doesn't work. Keep the goal, adjust the route, and get back on the path.

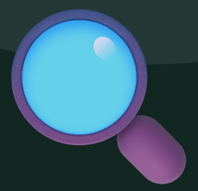
TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Wait a day, then look at what happened calmly.
- ✓ Change the plan, not the dream.

3

questions to ask

→



What worked? What didn't? What will I try next?



YOUR PLAN

Pick two to start today

- ✅ Decide on one goal, today
- ⚖️ Match your goals to your values
- 🧡 Write what success means to you
- ✍️ Write a clear goal statement
- 🌱 Frame it as something to start
- 🏁 Work back to this week's milestone
- 🚧 List likely obstacles and a plan B
- 📒 Start a progress journal
- 🎉 Pick a reward for each mini-goal
- 🔍 Review your week every Sunday



BONUS

Your 7-day goal tracker

Print this page and fill it in each evening. Every step forward counts.

DAY	TODAY'S STEP	DID IT? (Y/N)	WHAT WORKED	SMALL WIN OR REWARD
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				



KEEP GOING

When you feel stuck

- 🫱 Shrink the next step until it feels almost too easy
- 🧭 Check the goal against your values again. Is it still yours?
- 🤝 Talk it through with a friend, mentor or someone further along
- 🗺️ Keep the destination, but try a different route

If low mood or worry keeps getting in the way, talking to a counselor or your doctor can help.

This guide is general information, not professional advice.



YOUR NEXT STEP

Start today with one clear goal.

Decide on one goal, write it as something you'll start, and set this week's first small milestone before the day is out.

Choose your first goal now



SOURCES

The research behind this guide

Oscarsson M, Carlbring P, Andersson G, Rozental A. A large-scale experiment on New Year's resolutions: Approach-oriented goals are more successful. PLOS ONE, 2020.

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Dai H, Milkman KL, Riis J. The fresh start effect: Temporal landmarks motivate aspirational behavior. Management Science, 2014.

Sheldon KM, Elliot AJ. Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. JPSP, 1999.

Duckworth AL, Grant H, Loew B, Oettingen G, Gollwitzer PM. Self-regulation strategies improve self-discipline in adolescents. Educational Psychology, 2011.

