



How to Set Goals in the New Year

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Overview

Setting resolutions at the start of a new year can be effective if you create goals that are realistic and you make them fun in some way. You might brainstorm different ways to accomplish the goal or recruit a friend to help you do it. For example, to lose 10 pounds, consider how to exercise daily, take up a new dance or martial arts class, and ask a good friend to be your workout buddy to keep you motivated.

The idea is to maintain a healthy sense of humor: The more rigid or extreme the goal is, the less likely it will be that it will be attractive or attainable. Allow yourself to make mistakes and enjoy the process as much as reaching---or even surpassing--your new goals.

Step 1

List all the projects and goals you would like to complete during the New Year. Don't hold back: This is more of a brainstorming session to get all the ideas out onto paper for you to see them. Try not to censor yourself by limitations of time or budget--simply list the goals.



For example, a list might include: drop 15 pounds, buy a new car, take a surfing trip to Hawaii or meet new people.

Step 2

Cluster similar goals together to organize this large "wish list." You might group all exercise- and nutrition-oriented goals together. For example, list these similar projects together: joining a running group, doing at least 30 minutes of cardio a day, biking one day a week to work, eating fish once a week and cutting back on coffee. By doing this, the goals become more defined and clear-cut and less overwhelming.

Step 3

Trim your goals to the top five most important-or desirable goals. Think of working on these goals for the first six months of the New Year, say, from January to June.

If you had 15 to 20 goals on your "master list," by tackling a few at a time and prioritizing them, it will be more likely that you accomplish these goals.

Step 4

Create a specific time frame and action plan for each goal. For example, if you want to run with a group after work, check a calendar and determine which days of the week you are most likely to have time to run with them. It might be two days a week, like Tuesdays and Saturdays. The time frame might be three months to see if you like the group and feel it is working for you. The action plan would be to join the group and see how your workouts go for a month.

Step 5

Re-evaluate after a month. After 30 days, if you find you no longer have a burning desire to learn how to crochet a poncho, drop that crafting class from your goals list. Replace it with another goal or simply use that surplus time for your other goals.

Keep your sense of humor. If your workout buddy bails on you, replace him or her or decide to use your workouts as "moving meditations." If you need the motivation of someone else to exercise, book a trainer for a few sessions or ask a co-worker to fill in.