

Measurable Annual Goals At-A-Glance

WHAT ARE MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS?

Measurable annual goals describe what a student experiencing disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a 12-month period. These goals address the student's academic and functional needs that result from their disability and enable them to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum.

LEGAL FOUNDATION

Federal law requires that each IEP include "a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to:

- Meet the child's needs resulting from the disability to enable involvement and progress in the general curriculum; and
- Meet each of the child's other educational needs resulting from the disability."

For students taking alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, benchmarks or short-term objectives are also required.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

Component	Description	Examples	Non-Examples
CONDITION	The circumstances, materials, or assistance under which the behavior will be performed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When given a 4th grade reading passage • During independent work time • When presented with multi-step math problems • Given visual supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During class • When reading • With help • Using materials
TARGET BEHAVIOR	The specific, observable action the student will perform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will read aloud • Will write complete sentences • Will solve equations • Will initiate peer interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will understand • Will improve • Will learn • Will enjoy
CRITERION	The level of performance that demonstrates mastery (accuracy, frequency, duration, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With 90% accuracy on 3 consecutive assessments • For at least 4 minutes on 5 consecutive days • On 4 out of 5 opportunities • Increasing from current 65% to 85% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully • Appropriately • As needed • With improvement
TIMEFRAME	When the goal is expected to be achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the end of the IEP period • By June 2026 • By the end of the third quarter • Within 36 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eventually • Soon • In the future

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Component	Description	Examples	Non-Examples
MEASURING AND REPORTING PROGRESS	How progress will be monitored and when it will be reported to parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly curriculum-based measurements Quarterly progress reports Monthly behavior tracking data Work sample portfolio reviewed each trimester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As needed When appropriate Through observation Through regular grading

SMART FRAMEWORK FOR GOAL DEVELOPMENT

Specific: Clearly identifies exactly what the student will do

Measurable: Can be observed and quantified with objective criteria

Actively Phrased: Uses action verbs describing observable behaviors

Realistic but ambitious: Challenging yet achievable within one year

Time-limited: Includes a specific timeframe for achievement

ALIGNED AND PURPOSEFUL GOALS

Well-written goals are:

- **Connected to PLAAFP:** Directly address needs identified in present levels statement
- **Standards-based:** Guided by grade-level content standards when appropriate
- **Individualized:** Tailored to the student's unique circumstances
- **Ambitious:** Appropriately challenging in light of student's circumstances
- **Relevant:** Meaningful for the student's educational needs
- **Functional:** Address skills needed for current and future life demands

EXAMPLES OF MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

Reading Comprehension:

Given a 5th grade informational text, Robert will identify the main idea and 3 supporting details with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials by the end of the school year.

Written Expression:

When given a writing prompt and graphic organizer, Maria will write a 5-paragraph essay that includes an introduction, 3 supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion, scoring at least 15/20 points on the district writing rubric by May 2026.

Social Skills:

During unstructured social activities, Alex will initiate peer interactions using taught social scripts independently on 3 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive weeks by the end of the third quarter.

Math Calculation:

Given 20 two-digit by two-digit multiplication problems, Devon will correctly solve them with 85% accuracy on 4 consecutive weekly assessments by December 2025.

Self-Regulation:

Given early warning signs of frustration, Taylor will apply learned self-regulation strategies to remain on task for at least 10 minutes in 4 out of 5 observed instances by the end of the IEP period.

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COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

Pitfall	Why It's Problematic	Better Alternative
Vague language	Cannot be objectively measured	Use specific, observable terms
Missing components	Incomplete goal structure	Include all five components
Unmeasurable terms	Cannot determine if goal is met	Use quantifiable criteria
Too easy or too difficult	Not appropriately ambitious	Challenge student but keep realistic
Process-focused vs. outcome-focused	Measures effort not achievement	Focus on what student will achieve
Disconnected from PLAAFP	Not addressing identified needs	Link directly to needs in present levels
Multiple behaviors in one goal	Difficult to measure accurately	Create separate goals for distinct skills
Goals refers to Short Term Objectives or Benchmarks	Goals need to standalone and be meaningful.	Focus the goal on the specific skill or strategy to be mastered
Adult actions as goals	Measures what adults will do	Focus on student performance

QUICK CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATION

- Addresses needs identified in the PLAAFP statement
- Contains all four components: condition, behavior, criterion, timeframe
- Uses observable, measurable terms with specific criteria
- Is ambitious yet achievable within one year
- Enables progress in general education curriculum
- Can be clearly monitored using objective measures
- Is meaningful for the student's current and future needs

Remember: *Measurable annual goals serve as the roadmap for specially designed instruction and the benchmark against which progress is measured. Goals must be clear enough that anyone reading them would know exactly what the student is expected to achieve and how that achievement will be measured.*