

# 4

# TIPS FOR WRITING *measurable goals*

## *step one*

### TARGET A MEANINGFUL SKILL

The IEP Team must identify the child's individual needs and consider how each impacts their progress in the general education curriculum or age appropriate activities. When prioritizing which of these skills to target for an annual goal, consider the following:

– **Does this skill require specialized instruction?**

*Typical methods of teaching this skill must be adapted to meet the needs of the child.*

– **Is it something that is not likely to develop without intervention?**

*Target skills that will not likely develop by simply exposing the child to it more frequently. A skill that is appears to be emerging may not need to be targeted, as it is developing without **additional** instruction.*

– **Will learning this skill enhance the child's participation in daily routines?**

*Through acquisition of this new skill, will the child have greater access to age appropriate activities or be able to participate in a more natural way?*

– **Will the child be able to use this skill across a variety of settings and conditions?**

*Prioritize skills that are useful in the child's daily life. An IEP goal that targets requesting items throughout the day is more meaningful than the child being able to stack blocks during center time.*

– **Is this skill a priority to team members, including parents?**

*Seek input from IEP team members, especially the child's parents when determining skills to target.*

– **Is this a skill that is not addressed to the whole class during daily instruction?**

*Skills and concepts that are age appropriate for children to learn through whole group instruction (i.e. colors and shapes for 3 year olds) should not be targeted over skills that require specialized instruction.*

– **Is this skill measurable and observable?**

*Skills should be able to pass "stranger test." This means the definition of the skill is clear enough that two adults observing the same skill at different times would agree it was demonstrated (i.e. measurable: names, points, sits; not measurable: recognizes, understands, knows).*

## *step two*

### CHOOSE APPROPRIATE PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

The IEP team should determine how frequently the child must demonstrate the skill in order for it to be considered mastered.

**1. Examine baseline data to determine an appropriate amount of progress the child can be expected to make in one year.**

Example: Attainable -A three year old who consistently uses single words to request items could be able to use three word phrases by the end of the year. Likely unattainable-A child who does not exhibit any parallel play could not be expected to take turns in cooperative play by the end of the year.

## 2. Choose a criterion level at which the child should demonstrate the skill.

Determine if the skill occurs naturally/outside the predictable routine (e.g. selecting a calming activity when upset) or if it must be elicited by the teacher (e.g. choosing between two snack items). Instruction provided when something naturally occurs is an opportunity for the child to demonstrate the skill (e.g. 3 of 5 opportunities, 100% of opportunities) whereas skills elicited by the teacher can be described as trials and the criterion might read 90% of trials.

## 3. Decide how often you want to see the skill performed.

Example: 80% of trials **daily** (such as during snack time), 3 of 5 opportunities **weekly** (i.e. approaches peer in centers and asks for a toy), 75% of opportunities **monthly** (for a naturally occurring behavior you see infrequently or unpredictably).

## 4. Determine the number of times the child should demonstrate the criterion level before it is considered mastered.

Example: Sufficient-80% of trials daily for **2 consecutive weeks**, 3 of 5 opportunities weekly for **one month**, 75% of opportunities monthly for **one 9-week period**. Insufficient-3 of 5 opportunities weekly for one week, 80% of trials daily for 5 days.

step three

## WRITE A GOAL STATEMENT & SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

As you formulate an annual goal statement and objectives, remember the following:

- **A goal statement includes what is being achieved and how, where, and when that will occur.** Use the template on the next page as a guide for including all relevant goal components.
- **Goals should be written in positive terms and state what the child should do.**

Example: "choose a calming activity when upset" instead of "reduce temper tantrums"

- **Short-term objectives are incremental steps towards the annual goal. Think of the annual goal as the final objective to be mastered. Examples of objectives include:**
  - A task analysis (the steps that go into performing the skill targeted in the annual goal)
  - Increments of time (e.g. within 8 minutes, within 5 minutes, then within 2 minutes)
  - Number of prompts required (e.g. given 2 verbal prompts, given 1 verbal prompt, then independently)
  - Types of prompts given (such as a physical prompt or a verbal prompt)

step four

**PUT IT ALL TOGETHER...** flip the page for a goal template

# SAMPLE GOAL TEMPLATE

\_\_\_\_\_ *will*

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**Student Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Verb**  
(measurable & observable)

*during*  
*in order to*  
*in a field*  
*of*  
*with*  
*within*  
*given*  
*by*

**Behavior**  
(prioritized need based on standards, assessment, curriculum access)

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**Conditions**  
*examples: during* [times/settings], *in order to* [state why skill is important], *in a field of* [number of items], *with* [level of prompting, e.g. verbal, gestural, physical], *within* [a set amount of time], *given* [specific materials], *by* [desired student response, e.g. pointing, verbalizing, choosing]

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\_\_\_\_\_ *on* \_\_\_\_\_ *trials* \_\_\_\_\_ *on* \_\_\_\_\_ *opportunities* **+** \_\_\_\_\_ *daily*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *weekly*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *monthly*

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**Optional**

*for/over* \_\_\_\_\_ *data taken* \_\_\_\_\_ *times* \_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_ *IEP Review Date*

**Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number** \_\_\_\_\_

*days*  
*weeks*  
*months*  
*9-weeks*

*hourly*  
*daily*  
*weekly*

**Example 1:** Gabe will indicate his food preference at snack time by pointing to an item when prompted on 4 of 5 trials weekly for two weeks, data taken daily, by October 15, 2014.

**Example 2:** Molly will keep her hands in her lap or on the table when another student is within close proximity (one foot), given a picture cue of “keep hands to self”, on 100% of opportunities daily over five consecutive days, by October 15, 2014.