

HOW TO:
WRITE
MEASURABLE
IEP GOALS



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPED

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OVERVIEW ON WRITING MEASURABLE GOALS

When writing goals, focus on what the student can accomplish within one year (12 months). An annual goal does not have to be developed for every need listed in the PLAAFP.

At least one goal MUST be written in each area affected by the student's disability.

As the student masters his/her goals, use the needs identified in the PLAAFP page to develop new goals.

Measurable Annual Goals

Every annual goal must include the following:

Condition: State how the student will be prompted to complete the skill. This can include what information or material is used or how it is presented. This often begins with "When given. . ."

Performance: State the specific skill or observable behavior the student will perform. The skill should be linked to the student's skill-based assessment and to the district's curriculum and content standards (beginning at the student's current level of performance). This often begins with "(name) will . . ."

Criteria: State how the skill or observable behavior will be measured. Include how well (accurately) AND how often (consistently) the student must demonstrate the skill to consider it mastered.

Short-Term Instructional Objectives OR Benchmarks

Teachers may choose to include objectives or benchmarks under a goal to more clearly define the skills/behaviors included in a goal.

If a team includes objectives or benchmarks within a goal, there must be more than one short-term objective or benchmark for that annual goal.

NOTE: If your student is working on alternate content standards and is taking the alternate assessment, **all of that student's academic goals MUST include objectives or benchmarks** during the school years in which the student will be taking state and/or district assessments.

Short-term objectives are measurable, intermediate steps between a student's present level of educational performance and the annual goals established for the student. Short-term objectives are often used when the subskills leading to the goal change over time.

Benchmarks are also measurable indicators of skill acquisition. They are broader than short-term objectives and typically address major milestones. Benchmarks are often used when the skill or behavior remains the same, but the percentage, accuracy, or rate change over time.

Additional Required Information:

- Indicate how progress toward a goal will be measured,
- When progress report will be written and given to the parent,
- Document the progress made by the student on each annual goal or short-term objective/ benchmark during the reporting period, and
- Add any additional comments to families regarding student progress.





RULE 51

007.07A2 A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to:

007.07A2a Meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; or for preschool children, as appropriate, to participate in appropriate activities, and

007.07A2b Meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;

007.07A3 For children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives;

007.07A4 A description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals described in 92 NAC 51-007.07A2 will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided;



IDEA

§300.320 Definition of Individualized Education Program

(a) General. As used in this part, the term individualized education program or IEP

means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed,

reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with IDEA, Sec. 300.320 through

300.324, and that must include—

(2) (i) A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and

functional goals designed to--

(A) Meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child

to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and

(B) Meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;

Department of Education, Fed. Reg. 34 CFR, Parts 300 and 301 (2006)

Tips to Help Write IEP Goals and Instructional Objectives/Benchmarks

Provide a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to 1) meet the student's needs that result from the disability, 2) enable the student to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum, and 3) meet each of the student's other educational needs that result from the disability.

3 tips to take your IEP goals from good to great

1. Identify all of student's needs:

Review information from evaluation reports, progress reports, report cards, home-school communications, observations, and interviews to uncover the nature and extent of all of the student's academic, functional, developmental, and transition-related needs stemming from the disability. Consider the student's skill-related needs. For example, you may find that in addition to social communication skill deficits, a boy with autism has a deficit in self-care skills, such as washing his hands, compared to his same-age, same-grade, non-disabled peers. Also, consider the student's programmatic needs.

2. Discuss present levels:

Create a statement of the student's present levels of academic and functional performance for every need you

identify. The statement should detail what each skill deficit is, where it breaks down, and how you know.

- a. You want to be explicit, specific, and objective. You can't write a good goal statement without a good present levels statement.
- b. Make sure each statement passes the "stranger test. Example - If a child moves from Dubuque, Iowa, to Springfield, Ill., would an educator thoroughly understand the present levels statement?
- c. Also keep in mind that you should write present levels statements in a way that parents can understand them. (Don't write the student is at Level O in Book 15. You want to avoid acronyms. Each statement needs to be explicit.
- d. Sharing clear information with parents leads to a reduction of parent mistrust and a higher level of collaboration

3. Develop quantifiable goals:

- a. Draw from the baselines in the PLAAFPs to develop robust and measurable goals for the child's expected performance of each skill after a year's time.
 - i) For example, before writing a detailed goal that says a student will be able to pronounce P, H, R, and F sounds with 80 percent accuracy in four out of five trials, look at to what extent the student can pronounce those sounds now.
- b. Beware of writing goals that are not robust enough.

- i) For example, don't say a child is going to correctly choose a picture from a field of three with 60 percent accuracy in three out of five trials if data show he can accomplish more.
- c. Also look at the student's goals from the previous year to ensure you are not unwittingly repeating any.
- d. If goals are repeated, chances are, there's a problem. The problem could be you are not accurately documenting and giving the student credit for the progress made, or your goal statement is too generic to begin with, or the child has not been making progress and the IEP team ought to be asking hard questions about why not.

Questions to ask:

1. Was the goal inadequate?
 2. Was a service inadequate?
 3. Was the curriculum research-based and appropriate?
 4. What other factors can be attributed?
- e. Be very wary of goals that are repeated year to year."

Below are some ways IEP teams can use data to help write strong, legally compliant IEPs.

Refer to data for each goal. If you have good, student-specific data, then you can write a strong present levels statement."

Use qualitative and quantitative data. Use qualitative and quantitative information that reflects not only numerical data

about student performance level but also descriptive data about how it impacts the student's ability to access and make progress in the general education curriculum. Once you have strong present levels, it very easily directs discussion in terms of where you need goals and what they should be.

Set individualized goals for growth. Make the goal individualized by basing it on how the student is currently doing. Data will help you set performance goals.

IEP Instructional Objectives and Benchmarks

Do not confuse IEP goals and IEP objectives. It helps to think of objectives as steps toward a goal. You can use the term benchmarks instead of objectives.

Benchmarks indicate the interim steps a child will take to reach an annual goal. They also serve as a measurement gauge to monitor a child's progress and determine if the child is making sufficient progress towards attaining an annual goal. Using a roadmap analogy, benchmarks and short-term objectives are used to divide the trip to the final destination into concrete, smaller steps.



IEP Goal Example: The Student will develop social understanding skills as measured by the benchmarks listed below.

Objectives to support that IEP goal:

_____ will raise their hand and wait to be called on before talking aloud in group settings 4/5 opportunities to do so.

_____ will work cooperatively with peers in small group settings (i.e.. Share materials, allow peers to share different thoughts) 4/5 opportunities to do so.

_____ will develop an understanding of the relationship between his/her verbalizations and actions/effect on others 4/5 opportunities to do so.

_____ will engage in appropriate cooperative social play interactions initiated by others 4/5 opportunities to do so.

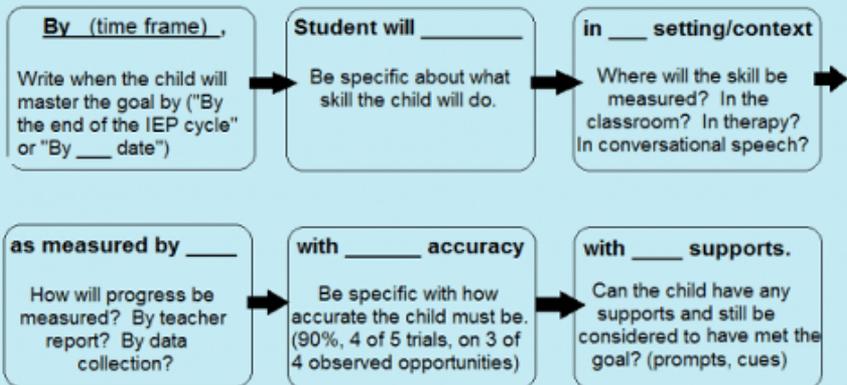
_____ will engage in cooperative social play interactions by allowing others to make changes or alter the play routine 4/5 opportunities to do so.

_____ will engage in appropriate turn-taking skills by attending to peer's turn and waiting for own turn 4/5 opportunities to do so.

_____ will appropriately acknowledge an interaction initiated by others by giving an appropriate response, either verbal or non-verbal.

Example of how to organize your goal. (<https://adayinourshoes.com>)

IEP Goal Formula



By _(time frame)_, Student will _____ in _____ setting/context as measured by _____ with _____ accuracy with _____ supports.

Including Baseline (Optional): If your employer requires you to include baseline in goals, add this "...student will increase/decrease _____ from a baseline of _____ to _____..."

By _(time frame)_, Student will increase/decrease _____ from a baseline of _____ with _____ supports to _____ with _____ supports with _____ accuracy as measured by _____.

* Items can be rearranged to help the sentence make logical sense

IEP Goals for Study Skills Examples:

- * Given the content areas of study, Student will be able to anticipate and verbalize/list X number of test questions.
- * Student will be able to identify X number of concerns that lead to test anxiety and brainstorm 1-2 solutions for each.
- * Given a calendar and content materials, student will be able to plot out study sessions to follow.
- * Student will self-identify X number of concepts that he/she is struggling to master and ask for assistance.
- * At the end of a study session, student will be able to verbalize X number of concepts or facts that were reviewed.
- * Student will be able to identify X number of items that are a distraction while studying and develop a remedy for each.
- * Given a list of options, student will identify which methods work best for learning material and concepts. (IE- graphic organizers, having someone read material, watching video, discussion)
- * When given an already graded/corrected test, student will review with tutor/teacher the incorrect answers and where correct information can be found. (can also include identifying strategies for next time)
- * Student will self-identify their most successful method of reading and note-taking and develop a strategy for each.

- * Student will be able to self-identify their best environment for test-taking. (quiet room, being able to talk out loud, verbal test, sensory break beforehand, etc.)

IEP Goals for Reading Comprehension Examples:

- * When given a grade-level text, STUDENT will read and demonstrate comprehension of grade-appropriate literary texts (e.g., stories, legends, poems). (Use objectives to make this specific and measurable.)
- * The student will use total communication (AAC device, PECS, and verbalization) to read and demonstrate comprehension of at least 12 new functional vocabulary words and related short phrases through reading and then completing a variety of vocational activities given minimal gestural cues within the larger school environment (i.e. school building, campus) in 4/5 opportunities.
- * The student will demonstrate reading comprehension of print texts with minimum assistance given 4/5 recorded opportunities.
- * When presented with text on his instructional level, the student will use context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words in reading materials with 80% accuracy, as measured by written work samples, by the end of (IEP Date).
- * The student will read and verbalize short phrases pertaining to vocational activities and complete functional vocational activities throughout the larger school environment (i.e. school building, campus) in 4/5 opportunities.
- * After reading or looking at a simple storybook, STUDENT will identify the main idea 80% of the time 4 of 5 trials.

- * When presented with a passage at the instructional level, STUDENT will read to confirm initial predictions with 80% accuracy 4 of 5 trials.
- * After reading a story, STUDENT will explain the sequence of events with 80% accuracy four of five trials.
- * Given minimum assistance, the student will read a short story (up to two paragraphs) and answer rotating who, what and where questions, why questions and how questions in 4/5 recorded opportunities.
- * After reading a story at the instructional level, STUDENT will identify the main idea and two supporting details with 80% accuracy four of five trials.
- * When presented with how, why, and what-if questions after reading a story silently, STUDENT will answer comprehension questions with 80% accuracy four of five trials.
- * After reading a story, STUDENT will identify the effect of a certain action with 80% accuracy 4 of 5 trials.
- * The student will match pictures to words and words to pictures for a minimum of 20 new functional vocabulary words in 4/5 recorded opportunities, given visual support and minimum assistance.
- * After reading a short passage and answering comprehension questions, STUDENT will locate, in the text, information to support answers, 4/5 times with 90% accuracy.

IEP Reading Goals Examples:

Here are other areas of reading where goals may need to be written.

- **Decoding** - By the end of the IEP period, when given a list of 40 multisyllabic words containing closed, open, consonant-vowel-e, and vowel team syllable types, the student will be able to decode 36/40 words correctly as measured by teacher records.
- **Fluency** - By the end of the school year, the student will read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression at 90 words per minute with 90% accuracy, as measured by teacher records on three consecutive occasions.
- **Finding Key Ideas and Details** - By the end of the IEP period, when given a skill-appropriate passage, the student will identify the main idea and provide at least three details related to the main idea with 90% accuracy in three out of four trials.
- **Vocabulary** - By the end of the IEP period, the student will use context clues and other strategies, such as consulting a dictionary, to help determine the meaning of unfamiliar words, with 80% accuracy in four out of five opportunities.

Writing short-term instructional objectives/ benchmarks:

- Benchmarks establish expected performance levels that allow for regular checks of progress that coincide with the reporting periods for informing parents of their child’s progress toward the annual goals.

- The short-term objectives or benchmarks derive from the annual goals but represent smaller, more manageable learning tasks a child must master on the way to achieving the goals.

- The purpose of short-term objectives and benchmarks is to enable families, children, and teachers to monitor progress during the year and, if appropriate, revise the IEP consistent with the child's instructional needs. They describe how far the child is expected to progress toward the annual goal and by when. In most cases, at least two objectives or benchmarks should be written for each annual goal. Progress on each short-term objective or benchmark should be documented.

The following template may assist in the writing of short-term objectives or benchmarks:

- Student will (do what) (to what extent) - (over what period of time) or (by when) as evaluated through _____ on the following schedule:
_____.

Examples:

- S. will wait his turn in group games for 3/5 turn-taking activities over three consecutive days as evaluated through teacher charting of the targeted behavior every 4 weeks.
- K. will highlight and/or underline important concepts in reading materials on 4 out of 5 trials over a two-week period as evaluated through corrected work in class every 2 months.
- By December, J. will initiate his class work when prompted by the teacher within 3 minutes over 10 consecutive trials as evaluated by structured observations of the targeted behavior once a month.
- Objectives and benchmarks must be measurable; they must use language that will allow a count of what a child does (i.e., The child will write, The child will read). Do not use phrases such as: "The child will understand," or "The child will appreciate").



Short-term objectives and benchmarks should include the following three components to ensure that they can be evaluated:

Objective Criteria that enable progress to be monitored and allow for determination of the point at which the objective has been accomplished, such as:

- 95% accurate
- fewer than 5 times per day
- 50 correct responses in one minute
- 4 out of 5 trials correct on three consecutive days

Evaluation Procedures to be used, such as:

- teacher observation
- written performance
- oral performance
- criterion referenced tests
- parent report
- observation
- time sample teacher-made tests

Schedules to determine how often the objective will be measured, such as:

- one-two weeks
- twice a week
- once a month
- six weeks
- nine weeks
- each semester
- annually

Some examples of possible short-term objectives are listed below. Each objective has numbers corresponding to the three components: (1) objective criteria, (2) evaluation procedure and (3) schedules.

- To read a 300-word article in the newspaper (1) in two minutes with 95% accuracy (2) as observed and recorded by the resource teacher (3) once a week.
- To create (1) fewer than 5 disruptions per day for three consecutive days (2) as observed and recorded by the teacher's paraprofessional (3) each day.
- To achieve (1) 95% accuracy (2) on a teacher made spelling test of seventh grade words as checked by the resource teacher (3) on a weekly basis.

IEP Goal Writing Worksheet:

MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS (Worksheet)

The following goals are recommended to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum, address other educational needs that result from the student’s disability, and prepare the student to meet his/her post-secondary goals.

Annual Goals What the student will be expected to achieve by the end of the year in which the IEP is in effect.	Criteria Measure to determine if goal has been achieved	Method How progress will be measured	Schedule When progress will be measured
Student will solve math word problems that involve addition and subtraction of two-, three-, and four-digit numbers.	90% accuracy on 8 out of 10 classroom assessments or worksheets	Classroom assignments, assessments, and worksheets	Every two weeks
Student will complete actions in response to 3-step verbal requests.	5 out of 5 times on 4 consecutive weekly trials	Charting of student responses	Weekly
Student will remain in class for 45–50-minute periods, requesting a “break” from in class work not more than three times per class period.	5 out of 7 days class periods per day over 6-week period	Daily charting of time in class	Monthly

Writing Measurable Goals Handout

Essential Elements of Measurable Annual Goals

Key Question: What should the child be doing a year from now?

Purpose: To describe what a child can reasonably be expected to accomplish within 12 months with specially designed instruction and related services. Measurable annual goals enable the child to be involved in and progress in age appropriate activities.

Definition: A measurable annual goal

- is directly related to the needs identified in the PLAAFP
- sets the direction for working with the child
- uses the baseline established in the PLAAFP as a starting point to monitor progress
- is stated in clear terms
- has four parts: time frame, conditions, behavior, and criterion

Key Characteristics:

- describes what the child will do
- measurable
- meaningful
- functional
- objective
- comprehensive

Writing Strategy

Describe the behavior the child will be doing when the goal is reached. Include the time frame, the conditions in which the behavior will be seen, the specific behavior to be achieved, and what level/degree will be used to identify if the goal has been achieved.

4 steps to measurable IEP goals



To remember the steps, think of the acronym **GOAL**:

Given. Use this word at the beginning of the goal to set the condition. *Given a journal prompt, Sarah will...*

Observable. Next, use an action word to clearly identify the behavior you're measuring. *Given a journal prompt, Sarah will orally read...*

A target is set. Set the criterion for exactly what the student should do to meet the goal: how much, how often, at what level. *Given a journal prompt, Sarah will orally read 90 words per minute with 3 or fewer errors...*

Limit time. By when should the student master the goal? *Given a journal prompt, Sarah will orally read 90 words per minute with 3 or fewer errors by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.*



IEP Goal Writing Hints

Note: Aligning IEP goals to grade level standards will help to ensure that regular educators share the responsibility for student mastery of both curriculum and IEP goals.

Steps for IEP Goal Writing:

1. Identify the student's present level of performance and prioritize critical needs in areas of skill deficit.
 - i. Determine which areas will have the greatest impact on grade level progress.
2. Identify essential grade appropriate clusters/ measurement topics, standards/learning targets, and/or skills from academic content standards.
 - i. Keep in mind the individual needs of the particular student.
3. Identify the conditions, or points of access, under which the student will access the grade level content.
4. Develop the goal in the appropriate format:

By (what date), **given** (conditions), **the student will** (do what observable behaviors) **with** (level of mastery and/or frequency) **as measured by** (assessments/measurements).

(Source: Content Area Grade Level. Domain. Standard(s))

IEP Goal Components:

Goal Component	Explanation
When...	<i>means...</i> By what date
Given what...	<i>means...</i> Under what conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Modifications (change the standard) · Accommodations (change materials, procedures, response formats, etc.) · Assistive technology (dictation software, calculator, etc.) · Instructional strategies (prompts, graphic organizers, etc.)
Who...	<i>means...</i> Student
Does what...	<i>means...</i> Observable behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Actions: create, make, analyze, sequence, summarize, complete, describe, demonstrate, build, read, etc.
How much...	<i>means...</i> Level of mastery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Level of skill acquisition (e.g. with 80% accuracy) · Level of independence (e.g. with 100% independence) · Level of task completion (e.g. in 4 out of 5 opportunities)
How often...	<i>means...</i> Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Daily, Weekly, During content area classes throughout the year, etc.
How measured...	<i>means...</i> Assessment (as measured by...) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Progress monitoring · Curriculum-based assessments · Teacher observations · District/state assessments · Self-charting of progress · Classroom progress (grades) · Behavioral data · Student work samples

Goal Component	Explanation
Cite the Standard	<i>means...</i> (Source: content Area Grade Level. Domain. Standard(s)) Daily, Weekly, During content area classes throughout the year, etc.

9/4/2013 (Jess Yates)

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