



# Setting Targets: How to cut down

## Cutting down how much you use is a great way to reduce your risk of harm.

However, successfully cutting down is not simply 'less of the same.' Because less of the same can soon become more of the same again. Cutting down is about changing how you use, how much you use, and trying to gain an understanding of which situations and events are most likely to influence how you use, and trying to avoid or respond to those in healthier ways, so that you find it easier to cut-down and maintain change. Some people find it best to take a break - and so not using - for a few weeks to help their transition

If your goal is to cut down you will need some targets that are specific, like these:

- How many substance free days per week or month?
- How often will I use?
- How many times will I use on using days?
- What is the maximum amount I will use at any one time?
- How much will I use in a week or month?
- What are my high risk situations where I'll avoid using?
- How will I use the substance? What are the risks if I used like this?
- How will I reduce the risk of harm?

## Example

John decided the following strategy would work for him.

1. I will avoid using cannabis after work on weekdays (Monday to Friday)
2. I will only smoke cannabis on one night of the weekend.
3. I will not smoke more than two pipes of cannabis in any one day
4. I will not buy large amounts of cannabis because it is too tempting.
5. I will avoid going to my friend's house where I know I'll be tempted to consume more
6. I will start trying to exercise or walk once per day
7. I will avoid using when I am feeling down and never use when I have been drinking

A helpful starting point for successfully cutting down how much you use, is to take

## My substance use guidelines are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

a short break from using, and then if you feel the need, move to a more controlled use. By taking a break, you can better identify the key situations and events that might place pressure you to use; whether or not you might be showing signs of dependence; and critically, it places a definitive end point to your previous style of using.

## Now that you have learned how to cut down, here are some related sheets that you might also find useful:

[How to stick to your targets](#)

[How to identify high-risk situations](#)

[How to handle high-risk situations](#)

[How to prepare for and respond to a slip](#)

[How to manage a slip](#)