



# How to set a goal

Now that you've decided to make a change to your substance use, your next decision is whether you'll use less, or stop using altogether.

## 1. Think about these questions:

- Do you have any health problems that might be made worse by your substance use? Or worries about the future if you keep using. You can ask your doctor or other health worker if you are not sure.
- Do you experience withdrawal symptoms when you stop using? If you do, stopping use entirely is probably the best goal for you. Your doctor can help you manage the withdrawal symptoms. Please also see Setting Targets How to Stop.
- Do you have any legal financial, or work problems because of your substance use?
- Do you have any family or relationship problems because of your substance use?
- Have you solved substance use problems before by stopping completely? Then this might be your best way now.
- Think about what you want from life, how changing your substance use might get in the way of this, and what you think is the best way just now to get the things you want from relationships, from family, from work and so on.

## The easiest way to set goals is to:

- think things through,
- think of a specific and clear goal
- think about what the pros and cons of the goal are
- make your choice

A useful acronym for goal-setting is to remember that they should be **SMART**:

- **Specific.** This means you should be really clear about what exactly it is that you want to achieve. For example, my goal is to "not use any drugs today" is better than "stop using drugs".
- **Measurable.** This means you should be able to measure how you go. For example "I want to smoke less than 40 cigarettes this week" is an example of a measurable goal.
- **Attainable.** This is important, because goals that are unattainable can make you feel worse for not achieving them. It is OK to start small with your goals, and achieve them one at a time. For example "my goal is to not drink at all today" may be more attainable than "my goal is to stop drinking forever." Eventually, you might be able to abstain forever, if that is what you want, but it is OK to start small.

- **Realistic.** Having a goal to win an Olympic gold medal is OK, but it is not be possible for everyone. Similarly, having a goal to "quit using forever" may not be realistic right now, for example if you are dependent. Start small, and make your goals manageable.
- **Time-bound.** The final point to remember is that you should set a time-frame for your goals. It's OK to have short, medium and longer term goals. For example, I want to quit drinking by next year (long term), but I've tried to quit cold turkey and failed. Therefore, this week my goal is to reduce my intake to X-number of drinks per day for this week (short term).

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## 2. Write down some positives and negatives

What are the good things and not so good things about cutting down, versus stopping completely. Can you write them down?

**Cutting down**

**Stopping completely**

Positives

Negatives

### 3. Choose your goal

Now that you have successfully written down some pros and cons, it's time to weigh up your choices to see which works better for you and your circumstances.

Take a moment to look over what you have written. Which do you feel is the best goal for you?

Mark your choice:

- To cut down your substance use go to the [Setting targets: how to cut down](#) sheet
- To stop substance use completely go to [Setting targets: how to stop](#) sheet

Remember, what you decide now might not be the decision you follow for the rest of your life. You can review your substance use goal regularly.

Whatever goal you choose it's a good idea to talk it over with the person you are closest to

**Now that you know how to track your use, here are some related sheets that you might also find useful:**

[How to cut down](#)

[How to stop](#)

[How to stick to your targets](#)

[How to track and understand influences on how you use and related harm](#)

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

### Example:

John completed the balance sheet and decided to cut down his cannabis use.

	Cutting down	Stopping completely
<b>Positives</b>	I could still use cannabis with my mates sometimes.	I wouldn't be tired and forgetful
	I would be able to use it to relax and unwind sometimes.	I wouldn't miss work
	I would still have fun at parties.	My girlfriend would be happy.
	Using less means I wouldn't be so tired and forgetful	
	If I only use at weekends I wouldn't miss work.	
	My girlfriend would be pleased if I cut down.	
<b>Negatives</b>	I won't be able to relax with a few cones after work each day.	I would really miss the fun times with my mates
		I would really miss relaxing with a few cones after work.
		My friends would laugh at me.
		I wouldn't enjoy myself so much at parties.