

# GOATs 101 (Goals, Objectives, Assignments and Tasks)



I borrow terminology and methods from the world of academic and corporate strategic planning when I set my writing goals. As a writer, you may have been told that you shouldn't set goals that you can't control or measure. Don't specify a goal of "Being Published" or "Getting an Agent," because the factors necessary for that to happen are not within your control. After this handy "GOATs 101" lesson, you'll see that you can make your goal as big and uncontrollable as you like. The objectives necessary to accomplish that goal however, you need phrase carefully. You also have to live with that you may never accomplish your goal, even if you complete your objectives.

Some short definitions:

**Goal:** *The overall thing you want to achieve.*

**Objectives:** *Specific measurable things needed to accomplish the goal. These are often associated with a deadline.*

**Assignments and Tasks:** *If you work with a team, assignments would be the specific work needed in order to meet an objective and the tasks would be assigned to specific people. Assignments and tasks do not have to happen sequentially, you can work on more than one at a time or skip from one to the other. Since I'm a one person team, I lump these two together. I usually associate them with a timetable that supports my objectives deadlines.*

Technically, strategic planning in the corporate and academic worlds can be much more complicated. Especially if we bring in terms like Vision, Mission, and Strategy. For my writing planning, I've found that I really just need GOATs. If I add other animals, the barnyard (my brain) gets too noisy.

Still a little confused? Let's see if a short example can make things clearer.

Let's say your goal is to summit DeNali (Mount McKinley). Your objectives may then be: 1) Train. 2) Get to Alaska. 3) Reach Base Camp. 4) Attempt to Summit. You'd then break down each objective into manageable activities and tasks. For Objective 1, you may need to purchase equipment, book some time in the climbing gym, do shorter trips to high altitudes to acclimatize, etc. For Objective 2, you need to purchase plane tickets, find someone to watch the dog, etc.

Writing is not all that different to mountain climbing. Your goal is still to reach a summit of some sort, the objectives are the steps necessary to climb to the top, and the activities and tasks are the grunt work needed to get the objectives done. I use the simple chart on the next page to clarify my GOATs.



# GOATs Template



**Goal:**

**Objective 1:**  
**Deadline:**

**Objective 2:**  
**Deadline:**

**Objective 3:**  
**Deadline:**

**Obj 1 Assignments and Tasks:**



**Obj 2 Assignments and Tasks:**



**Obj 3 Assignments and Tasks:**

