Goal-Setting

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you set goals for your work, study, or personal life?
2. What are the key features of a good goal?
3. What factors make it difficult for us to reach our goals?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can. Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

_____	1.	achievable	a)	a point or level that one can't go beyond
_____	2.	concrete	b)	lacking specific or unique features, not special or distinctive
_____	3.	generic	c)	having high goals
_____	4.	clutter	d)	the making of new things
_____	5.	limit	e)	possible to do or accomplish
_____	6.	narrow	f)	to set apart or show as different
_____	7.	ambitious	g)	thin, not wide
_____	8.	shortcut	h)	specific
_____	9.	distinguish	i)	a quicker or easier way to do something
_____	10.	innovation	j)	a messy and disorganized collection of things or ideas

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Reading

GOAL-SETTING
Small steps, big wins

1. Have you ever heard a language learner say "I want to be fluent," or "I wish I had perfect grammar"? (Maybe you've even expressed these goals yourself!) While it's natural to begin with big dreams, most students benefit from more bite-sized targets—ordering a coffee, for example, or holding a ten-minute conversation on hiking. Suddenly, progress is trackable, motivation sticks, and successful communication feels **achievable**.
2. Since the mid-20th century, goal-setting has been one of the most-studied topics in management and self-development. Popular acronyms include SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound), WOOP goals (Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan) and OKRs (Objectives and Key Results). Approaches vary, but experts tend to agree on a core formula: choose a meaningful target, map out **concrete** actions, and set a deadline.
3. Research suggests that people who set good goals are more productive and successful. A 2002 meta analysis found that performance increased by 30% when people were given specific, challenging targets versus **generic**, "do your best" instructions. Having a specific goal clears the **clutter** and focuses our attention on practical steps. Choosing "stretch" goals—ones that challenge us—pushes us past the **limits** we set for ourselves. Even simply writing goals down can help. In a 2007 study at Dominican University, participants who wrote their goals were 42% more likely to achieve them.
4. Goal-setting is a powerful tool, but it's not without risks. Although having a clear target can sharpen focus, it can also cause us to miss problems or opportunities outside our **narrow** view. Sometimes **ambitious** goals can encourage unethical **shortcuts**. In the late 1960s, Ford Motor Company famously pushed to bring its Pinto model to market in two years instead of the usual four. While Ford successfully met their own deadline and stayed under budget, they overlooked important safety concerns. In the end, they lost $125 million in lawsuits when the Pinto caused thousands of car crashes across the United States.
5. Still, there are ways to embrace goal-setting without the downsides. Some psychologists recommend **distinguishing** between outcome goals ("get a C1 English certificate") and process goals ("read and discuss an interesting article every day"). When it comes to long-term or creative work, prioritizing process over results can help. True **innovation** often comes from periods of planned "non-productivity," where workers are free to wonder and ideas have time to take shape. And sometimes, at least, the reward is in the work; the destination *is* the journey.

"You do not rise to the level of your goals.
You fall to the level of your systems."

—James Clear, author

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Comprehension

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. What message is the author mainly trying to communicate?

   a) People who set goals are more successful in the workplace.
   b) Goal-setting can help as long as we use it strategically.
   c) Writing down goals guarantees success.
   d) Process goals should replace outcome goals.

2. Which of the following is mentioned as a process goal?

   a) pass an English test
   b) get a job promotion
   c) read one article every day
   d) become fluent in a language

3. According to the text, why can setting a "stretch" goal improve performance?

   a) It helps us stay focused on concrete actions.
   b) It helps us achieve our goal before the deadline.
   c) It helps us be more flexible and avoid narrow thinking.
   d) It helps us push ourselves to achieve more than we thought possible.

4. Why does the reading mention the Ford Pinto?

   a) to show how ambitious goals can have negative consequences
   b) to show the use of goal-setting in business
   c) to show how narrow goals can lead to missed opportunities
   d) to show that goals help companies meet deadlines and save money

5. What does paragraph 5 suggest about innovation?

   a) It only happens when we set outcome goals.
   b) It often comes during unstructured or creative time.
   c) It happens when workers follow SMART goals.
   d) It's mostly luck and can't be planned.

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Vocabulary Review

A. Choose the Correct Word

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

1. When goals are too <u>generic</u>, we may feel unclear about what success actually looks like.

   a) easy
   b) general
   c) unique

2. Writing down goals helps reduce mental <u>clutter</u>.

   a) confusion
   b) variety
   c) organization

3. Goals feel more <u>achievable</u> when we break them down into small steps.

   a) possible
   b) quick
   c) difficult

4. OKRs help turn big ideas into <u>concrete</u> targets.

   a) challenging
   b) interesting
   c) specific

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
You may need to change the word forms.

1. When promotions or pay bonuses depend on goal achievement, employees sometimes take _____ to reach targets more quickly.
2. It's helpful to _____ between short-term and long-term goals when choosing a goal-setting strategy.
3. Frameworks like SMART goals recommend setting a time _____ to keep goals manageable.
4. Some companies give workers weekly free time for creative thinking to encourage _____ .
5. A _____ focus on test preparation can cause a language student to miss opportunities for real-world communication.
6. Setting _____ goals can stretch us to achieve more than we thought possible.

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Grammar Review

ADVERB CLAUSES OF TIME

A. Reference

Adverb clauses of time give information about **when** certain actions take place. An adverb clause, together with the independent clause, shows whether two actions take place at the same time or different times in the past, present, or future.

Adverb	Example
after	**After** I listen to an English podcast, I explain it to a friend.
as soon as	I stretch for five minutes every morning **as soon as** I wake up.
before	**Before** I scroll on my phone at night, I write my goals for the next day.
by the time	**By the time** the semester begins, I will have automated three weekly tasks.
every time	**Every time** I get negative feedback, I write down one way to improve.
once	**Once** I build the habit of reading daily, I'll start a blog to share my thoughts.
when	I will apply for a promotion **when** I finish my certification.
whenever	**Whenever** I feel stuck, I take five minutes to reset and prioritize.
until	I'll keep practicing customer calls **until** I can handle them without a script.

Punctuation Note:

The punctuation of a sentence with an adverb clause of time depends on which clause comes first.

If the sentence begins with an adverb clause, it is usually followed by a comma.
If an independent clause begins a sentence, it is almost never followed by a comma.

Note that there is no difference in meaning in the examples below:

- **Before** I scroll on my phone at night, I write my goals for the next day.
- I write my goals for the next day **before** I scroll on my phone at night.

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Grammar Review cont.

B. Practice

Choose the best answer for each sentence.

1. I turn my phone on silent _____ I'm reading for language practice.

   a) before
   b) whenever
   c) after

2. We will recruit and hire two new team leads _____ Q3 begins.

   a) whenever
   b) until
   c) before

3. _____ I feel stressed at work, I do a quick breathing exercise.

   a) By the time
   b) Every time
   c) Once

4. I change into workout clothes and go to the gym _____ I get home in the evening.

   a) as soon as
   b) until
   c) by the time

5. I'll listen to sports podcasts _____ I can hold a 10-minute conversation about football.

   a) after
   b) every time
   c) until

6. _____ I save enough money for emergencies, I'll start investing.

   a) Once
   b) By the time
   c) Before

Discussion

1. How do process goals and outcome goals differ? Which type motivates you more?
2. Research suggests that writing down goals increases the chance of success. Have you ever written down a goal? What happened?
3. When can having a narrow focus be a good thing? When might it be harmful?
4. Which goal-setting methods (SMART, WOOP, OKRs, etc.) are you familiar with? How can we choose the right approach depending on the task or situation?
5. Do you think ambitious goals are always a good idea? Can you think of a time when a "stretch" goal helped or hurt you?

Critical Thinking

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

Think about some of your own goals in your work, study, or personal life. They can be outcome goals or process goals. Share your goals with your classmates. Try to use adverb clauses of time (e.g., *I want to find a new job* ***before*** *next year.* ***Whenever*** *I have an interview, I write down what went well and what I can improve.*).

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Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

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Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about how setting goals can help us achieve our dreams. They practice using adverb clauses of time to describe workplace, personal, and language-learning goals.

LEVEL: High Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, goals, goal-setting, SMART, OKRs, soft skills, productivity, adverbs, adverb clauses of time

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

1. e	3. b	5. a	7. c	9. f
2. h	4. j	6. g	8. i	10. d

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 7. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

1. b	2. c	3. d	4. a	5. b

Vocabulary Review

A. CHOOSE THE CORRECT WORD

1. b	2. a	3. a	4. c

B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

1. shortcuts
2. distinguish
3. limit
4. innovation
5. narrow
6. ambitious

Grammar Review

B. PRACTICE

1. b	2. c	3. b	4. a	5. c	6. a

Discussion

Answers will vary.
Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

Critical Thinking

Answers will vary.
Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

Listening

1. achievable
2. concrete
3. generic, clutter, limits
5. narrow, ambitious, shortcuts
6. distinguishing, innovation

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Practise* (when used as a verb, *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.

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