



## Is it better to set many small goals?

Some people find value in taking one step at a time, while others prefer going all in.

### What you need to know

- Setting and working toward goals can help young people learn responsibility, perseverance, resilience, and self-confidence.
- A 2023 survey found that most people give up on New Year's resolutions in about two to three months.
- A study found that people who focused on smaller steps made more progress toward a goal until they finished 30% of the task. At 70% of the goal, however, they accomplished more by looking at the bigger picture.



**FRESH START**  
Popular times to set goals include January 1, the start of spring, and the start of the school year.

Some goals are fun, like reading every book in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series or learning to make the perfect pancakes. Others, such as learning to play an instrument or running a faster mile, are more challenging and might even make us second-guess ourselves. Either way, it's important to set goals and strive for them. Achieving them takes hard work and dedication, and people take different approaches to doing so. Some say the key to success is to break a goal down into many smaller tasks and go step-by-step. Others, however, think striving for a big goal is the best way to push ourselves. What do you think? Is it better to set many small goals?

### Yes—big goals are overwhelming

If you want to write a novel, what feels more achievable: writing hundreds of pages a day or just a few sentences? Breaking a big goal into smaller goals is like drawing a road map to your destination. Taking small steps as part of your regular routine makes you more likely to succeed. You're also less likely to give up because of all the time and effort you've already put into each step along the way. And nothing is more motivating than progress, which is easier to measure with smaller steps. If you want to learn to play the guitar, it will feel great to be able to play a few chords after a month, right?

### No—that defeats the purpose

Goals are about getting out of our comfort zone and challenging ourselves, which isn't supposed to be easy. If you want to achieve something big, you have to go all in, not take baby steps. It might be hard along the way, but the reward will be worth it. And setting smaller goals might give us instant gratification, but it can also hold us back. Why limit yourself to writing two sentences a day when you could write a whole page or more? Pursuing a big goal also requires vision, planning, and determination. These are skills that will serve us well now and throughout our lives.

### YES Three reasons it is better to set many small goals

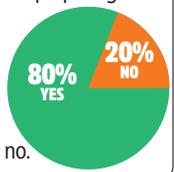
- 1 Smaller goals are more achievable steps along the way toward the larger goal.
- 2 If you set a routine and keep at it, you're more likely to succeed and less likely to give up once you've put so much into it.
- 3 When you assess your progress, you can see exactly how far you've come. That gives you an extra dose of motivation!

### NO Three reasons it is not better to set many small goals

- 1 Smaller goals keep us in our comfort zone, which defeats the purpose of setting a big goal in the first place.
- 2 It might feel good in the moment to achieve a smaller task, but that can also slow us down and hold us back.
- 3 Reaching for big goals teaches us life lessons that will help us in the future.

### LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if cereal should be poured before milk. Your thoughts on preparing this breakfast classic were clear: 80% of you said yes, and 20% said no.



### What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit [kids.theweekjunior.com/polls](https://kids.theweekjunior.com/polls) so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think it's better to set many small goals or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

**The goal of the big debate** is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.