

Make Goals, not Resolutions this Year •

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I'm not the type of person who makes resolutions for the new year. Instead, I try to set some goals. Why? Well, one reason is that resolutions, by nature, are extremely difficult. There's usually no endpoint to a resolution—it's simply an ongoing test of willpower.

Goals on the other hand have a final destination. They're also measurable, and can be divided into shorter-term goals to help you get started.

As an artist, I often look ahead to decide how I want my art to evolve in the coming year. Setting goals helps me deliberately make sure those changes happen.

But maybe you don't know exactly how you want your art (or life) to change. Here's what I always suggest you do in that situation.

1. Brainstorm. For a week.

In one of my recent articles on [living creatively](#), I talk about setting aside time every day just to think, dream, and plan.

Thinking about your situation is an integral part to setting goals for yourself. Look honestly at your art and creative process, and see what you think of it. Spend a few days on this. Consider what others have said about your work. Are you completely satisfied? Is there something else that you dream of doing? Perhaps you really want to get into a certain art gallery, or would simply like to earn more money from your art so that you could quit your "real" job. Whatever your dreams are, make sure they're YOUR goals, and something you really want; NOT what's expected from you, or what everyone else is trying to do.

2. Get your goals down on paper (or the computer)

Once you have some goals in mind, write them down. When I get started one of my "goal-setting" kicks, I usually spend about a half-hour and write down at least five things I want to achieve. When you do this, don't limit yourself to small improvements or little ideas. Have a good mix, with a few goals that you think you could achieve within a week, or a month.

And then. . . write down at least one completely crazy, long-shot idea that seems like it couldn't happen in a million years. Big impossible goals still have to start somewhere, so don't get overwhelmed by the size of the task. The next part of the process takes care of that.

3. Research anyone who has achieved your goals

During next five days set aside an hour per day for one of your goals. At first, all of that time should be set aside for research. This is VERY important. See how others got to the place you want to be. Find out everything you can about what you'd have to change, what you'd have to learn, or where you'd have to go to achieve it.

You see, there's no need to start from scratch—most likely there are many people who have done exactly what you want to do. Use that knowledge to help you along your way.

It's also helpful to make a list of your abilities, and see if you have a head-start on one or more of your goals already. This may give you an idea of which goals you should focus on first, and which ones need more education or resources before you can completely dive in.

4. Finalize a plan that you can work on daily

In the end, you should have five lists, one for each goal. Each list will contain all the steps (short-term goals) it will take to achieve that specific dream. Some of your goals will only have a few steps. Some may have hundreds or even thousands. The point is not to try to accomplish the really big ones right away, but simply to cross off a few *steps* each week, for one goal or another.

That's the secret to achieving your goals. Do a little bit at a time, each part building on the others until you've achieved what you set out to do.

So don't make resolutions for 2011. Instead, plan out some goals, change your life, and make it the best year ever.