

Tip Sheet: IEP Goal Considerations

This resource has been developed to help teams bolster their understanding of components/criteria for writing high-quality IEP goals. This tip sheet is adapted from the ECTA Center's [Enhancing Recognition of High Quality Functional IEP Goals](#)

High-Quality IEP Goals

| Criteria | Explanation | Example |
|---|--|---|
| Jargon free; written in plain language | The goal is written in such a manner that it can be understood by the family and the general public. | Use words such as “will speak clearly” instead of “articulation”. |
| Positive in focus | The goal emphasizes the positive and what the child will do. | “Mia will play with her peers on the playground” instead of “Mia will not bolt from the play structures”. |
| Describes participation in age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate activities. Describes the CONDITION in which a child will demonstrate progress WITHOUT naming a placement or educational environment. | The goal addresses developmentally appropriate routines and activities that promote the child’s progress towards identified outcomes such as positive social relationships, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and/or use of appropriate actions to meet needs. The goal includes academic areas that are appropriate for young children (e.g., early math and early literacy) and skills needed for functional independence. | “Trevor will use large crayons by himself to draw pictures that tell a story”. Avoids words that describe isolated skills or rote responses (e.g., memorizing colors). |
| Observable | Observable = evidence available through hearing and/or seeing the child say or do the things described in the goal. | Observable words include “eat, play, run” instead of passive words “increase, decrease, receive, tolerate”. |
| Measurable | Measurable = describes the level of performance that will be needed to achieve the goal and | Measurable words include how many times or the length of time. |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | determine if progress has been made and the evidence can be documented. | |
| Describes HOW the child will demonstrate a skill. | The goal describes what the child will do and includes clear strategies and/or accommodations. | “Using pictures, Milo will play an interactive game with a friend” instead of “Milo will answer questions about a game”. |
| Describes the SITUATION in which the child will demonstrate the skill. | The goal describes the general routine or activity where the child completes the task without identifying the setting or a specific location. | Does not identify a placement or educational environment. Goals should be written so that the child can accomplish them anywhere (e.g., “when standing”, “when going to the bathroom.” |

Examples of High-Quality Goals:

- 1) When asked what he wants, Nathan will use words and/or gestures, including refusals (“no, don’t like it”) to convey needs and wants most of the time (4 out of 5 times) throughout his routines and activities each day.
- 2) When prompted, Ellie will be able to make comparison observations by correctly pointing to groups of objects or toys that have more or less in 3 out of 5 attempts.
- 3) Evelyn will play by selecting a toy, trying new ways to play with it, or exploring other toys for 3 minutes at a time at least once each day.

