COMPLIANTIEP TIP SHEET

Measurable Annual Goals

The four parts every IEP goal needs, and what each one looks like when it is actually measurable.

A goal is measurable when two different people, reading it on two different days, would collect the same data and reach the same conclusion about whether the student met it. Most goals that get flagged in a file review fail on the criterion or the condition, not on ambition. This sheet is for teachers and case managers writing or revising annual goals.

WHAT DOES IDEA SAY?

34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)(i) — eCFR version 2026-08-03

"A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to— (A) Meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and (B) Meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability."

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A MEASURABLE GOAL

COMPONENT	THE QUESTION IT ANSWERS	MEASURABLE EXAMPLE	NOT MEASURABLE
Condition	Under what circumstances, with what materials and what level of support?	Given a third-grade-level passage and no adult prompting	When appropriate
Target behavior	What observable thing will the student do? Student behavior, not adult behavior.	Will read aloud with correct phrasing and punctuation	Will improve reading
Criterion	How well, how often, how accurately?	At 90 words correct per minute with 3 or fewer errors	At an acceptable level
Timeframe and measurement	By when, measured how often, and by what method?	By the annual review date, on 4 of 5 consecutive weekly probes	By the end of the year

BEFORE THE MEETING

- Every goal traces to a need named in the PLAAFP. If it is not in the present levels, it does not belong in the goals.
- State the baseline in the same unit as the criterion — 52 words correct per minute now, 90 by the annual review.
- One goal, one measurable outcome. If a goal contains 'and', check whether it is really two goals.
- Name the measurement method, not just the number: weekly curriculum-based probes, work samples, frequency count.
- Confirm the criterion is reachable in one year from the stated baseline. Ambitious is required; arbitrary is not.
- Check that a substitute teacher could collect the data from the wording alone.

WHERE CAN YOU LEARN MORE?

- **§300.320 Definition of individualized education program**
  Electronic Code of Federal Regulations
  The controlling federal text for IEP content, including the measurable-annual-goals requirement quoted above.
  `https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-III/part-300/section-300.320`
- **IEP Tip Sheet: Measurable Annual Goals**
  PROGRESS Center at the American Institutes for Research
  Federally funded guidance on developing measurable annual goals, with worked examples and links to the underlying research.
  `https://promotingprogress.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Goal_IEP_Tips.pdf`
- **IEPs module**
  IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University
  Free self-paced modules on IEP development used widely in teacher preparation.
  `https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu`

RELATED GUIDES

- Writing a PLAAFP statement the goals can hang from `compliantiep.com/learn/how-to-write-a-plaafp-statement`
- Collecting baseline data before you write the goal `compliantiep.com/learn/iep-goal-baseline-data`
- Progress monitoring requirements `compliantiep.com/learn/iep-progress-monitoring`