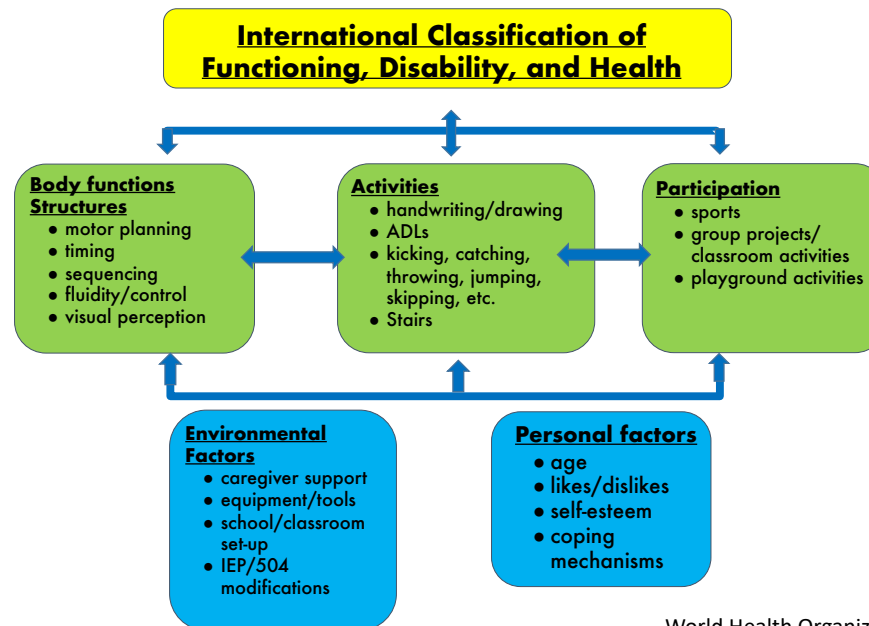


Schoodles Goal Writing Guide

Progression of creating a functional /strengths-based goal:

- Receive the referral.
- Interview teachers and parents and review occupational profiles.
- Identify deficits or challenge areas in body functions and structures and skills using observations and assessment tools such as the BOT-3, Peabody VMI, Schoodles School Fine Motor Assessment, Sensory rating scales, etc.
- Analyze and identify how these challenges create barriers to completing or participating in activities in the academic setting and connect them in the report.
- Establish the activity or participation level (top-down) priorities of the teacher.
- Establish the activity or participation level (top-down) priorities of the student/family.
- Write a present level of performance and needs statements for activity or participation level skills.
- Collaborate with teachers to create a functional/strengths-based goal.



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STEPS to Writing a Functional /Strengths-Based Goal:

1. **Review the Student Occupational Profile and Assessment Findings.** This is a big-picture look at the student that will place the goal in context with the student's experience at school. Review classroom concerns, current IEP goals, and how assessment findings might impact student outcomes in challenge areas. Focus on how support or intervention might improve student success in those areas.
2. **Use the SMART Goal Framework or Another Similar Format to Create Goals.**

Specific –

When a referral is vague about the concerning issue, consult the classroom teacher to identify the specific need is. This step often leads directly to goal formulation. Consider the functional purpose of the goal. What challenges hinder a student's ability to complete their work or participate in activities to the extent, that they can't do their work?

Focus on student-centered goals rather than 'OT' goals. Goals must relate to something the student needs to or has to do in the classroom. To test your goal, ask: What does the student need to be able to do in the classroom to be successful? A starting point could be, 'X needs to improve handwriting legibility'. Then expand it to, 'To show improvement in legible handwriting needed for __ , X will'.

Avoid using occupational therapy jargon, such as 'to improve bilateral coordination'. Our goals should pass the stranger test-- can someone unfamiliar with occupational therapy understand this goal? Additionally, we should ask, how do our goals support those of the teacher? As a related service, we must write goals to assist students in benefiting from their current educational plans.

Identify the skills that need development for the student to succeed. These skills, such as strength, coordination, and sequencing, may be part of our intervention plan rather than the goal itself. Ensure the goal connects to the present level of performance and needs, creating a logical flow from assessment to current level of performance to the goal. 'In order to...'

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Is the goal recognizable as an OT goal? (reminder-it shouldn't be). The goal is part of a plan that the entire team is responsible for and should be aware of as they work with the child. A team-based approach ensures optimal chances for goals to be met. Is the goal specific to the student? Make it specific by referencing something the student is currently doing as a foundation to build upon or as a source of motivation.

Consider the student's interests and strengths when crafting goals. Incorporating what the student enjoys or excels at in the goal reminds others that this is important to the student and can increase their motivation and engagement. For example, if a student is passionate about art, a goal might be framed around improving fine motor skills to enhance their drawing abilities, thus making the goal more meaningful and attainable.

Measurable –

Goals should include elements that are **EASY** to track. Again, use the stranger test. Can someone else (like occupational therapists, teachers, or parents) look at this goal, work with the student on it, and measure it? Imagine measuring the goal to ensure its clear . Avoid variables that are difficult to quantify such as percentages of time (e.g. 50% of the time). Avoid vague terms like minimal or maximal assistance, as these lack specificity.

Instead, focus on quantifiable metrics like the number of verbal, physical, or visual cues, the duration in minutes, or the count of errors. You may use the number of trials, but be cautious not to overwhelm the student with the measurement process; for example, aiming for three legible sentences in three out of five trials may be too demanding and not specific enough. Incorporate a time frame, such as three to five trials over the course of four weeks. Another measurable example could be the number of errors in a ten-word or thirty-letter sentence, which can be easily converted into a percentage by the therapist and is understandable for parents, teachers, and students tracking their own progress.

To increase the measurability of handwriting goals, refer to the Schoodles Legibility Rubric (Student version can be found in the Schoodles Free Resources area and therapist version is included in the membership) within the goal. Rubrics can transform qualitative data into quantitative metrics.

For sensory goals, measure the behavior that is interfering with the student's academic experience, you are trying to help decrease. For instance, from x times per day to x times per week.

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Attainable –

Ensure the goal is within reach. It's preferable to set a modest target rather than maintain the same goal year after year. This gives the student, parents, and staff something to celebrate. Use baby steps. Begin at the student's current level of performance and gradually increase the difficulty or enhance a specific skill component. For example, instead of aiming for "will tie his shoes," consider "will complete the final step of a tying sequence." Similarly, for a student with no writing skills, rather than saying "will write his name," you might set the goal as "will engage in two name-writing activities each week." This approach allows for tailoring the goal to the individual child while also promoting success. Goals can be revised during periodic reviews to reflect progress.

Relevant-

Is the goal important for the student's participation in their academics? Is the goal worthwhile for the student? For instance, if the student is able to secure his shoes without tying them and finds an alternative method effective, a shoe tying goal may not be relevant. Begin by identifying a top priority. Consider the broader context: what do other students need to accomplish in class? For instance, is it necessary for an 11th-grade student to focus on handwriting when their peers are not required to write legibly and can utilize different methods.

Time –

Time is inherently integrated into the goal, as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) span one year with designated reporting periods or reviews. These shorter time frames provide a chance to break the goal down into smaller steps and measurable milestones.

3. Keep the goals functional.

Avoid Writing Goals About:

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- Grasp: While grasp can be a condition of the goal, it should not be the goal itself. Instead, use, "In order to more fully participate in classroom written expression activities by increasing legibility of handwriting, X will...", using a tripod grasp or other functional grasp," focus on the ultimate goal of achieving legible written output.
- Block Design: This activity is neither functional nor essential in a school setting.
- Bead Stringing: This is not a necessary activity within the school curriculum.
- Motor Planning: This term is overly technical and refers to a supporting skill.
- Following a 2 or 3-Step Activity: While this can be a condition, it should not be the main goal. Instead use, "to complete a classroom art project, the student will be able to follow a 2 or 3-step...", focus on the functional activity.
- Visual Motor Skills or Visual Motor Integration: This terminology is too complex; specify the targeted activity, such as handwriting, cutting, or project assembly.
- Any terms related to subtests in assessment tools:
- Any supporting skills such as visual memory, visual skills, motor skills, figure ground or any visual perceptual component, hand strength, ocular motor skills, body awareness, fine motor control, bilateral coordination, working memory, core strength, posture, upper extremity strength, crossing midline, and finger dexterity. These skills *support* classroom outcomes and can be addressed in the intervention or support plan, but they are not understandable to others and are not functional classroom outcomes.

Always return to the question: "What does the student need to accomplish in the classroom?" Use the "stranger test" to ensure that someone unfamiliar with occupational therapy can understand the goal. Goals should relate to activities the student is currently engaged in or wishes to participate in within their academic environment.

Do Write Goals About:

- Handwriting endurance
- Legibility
- Letter formations
- Copying near and far point
- Hand pain
- Spacing
- Sizing
- Letter-to-line alignment
- Using both hands together for classroom tasks

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- Attention to classroom tasks
- Cutting
- Coloring
- Tracing
- Name writing, and more
- Improving behaviors related to sensory dis-regulation, defensiveness, or seeking.

4. Make them strengths-based and student-specific.

Including **accommodations** and supports **in the goal** assures they are used. For instance, if a student has a favorite writing tool, grip, paper, or seating, include those.

Make sure the goal is a **priority** for the student or family. Ask the student to help write the goal and measure their success. Offer the family and teacher measuring tools like a rubric to help them understand what to work on outside of OT sessions.

Include language referencing how the student's **classroom experience, global participation, or occupation** of being a student in that class relates to the goal. 'In order to increase his success in classroom writing tasks, X will..'

Adding a **student's strength** to a goal is not necessary but will remind the student, family, and staff that the student has skills that can be built upon to support progress.

Goals **don't have to target independence**. Students may need to rely on supports and accommodations to participate in their roles. Alternatives to handwriting (keyboarding, voice-to-text) could be considered if a deep dive into the student's abilities and interests in alternatives is included. Fading accommodations and supports are not appropriate for everyone.

Focus on what we can **facilitate** rather than what we can 'fix' or change. A child with CP or Down Syndrome may not be able to increase flexibility or change tone but focus on what they can do and how we can build on that.

Use **objective or positive language** to describe current skills.

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If appropriate, use move from > to, to facilitate including baseline skills.

Use the student **rubric** with the student to check the goals.

Examples:

1. To increase her participation in written expression assignments, Jane will use her ability to focus for at least 3 minutes to write one sentence, using her preferred adapted paper and with one verbal cue, that scores ___ or above on the legibility rubric. Sentences will be written in her classroom setting and rated by the teacher, therapist, or student across three trials by the end of 10 weeks of support with the OT. (Burst of service model)
2. To increase Levi's ability to participate in classroom writing assignments along with his peers, he will use his ability to keep his letters spaced correctly to write one legible sentence, using raised line paper and one visual cue from the classroom aide, that scores ___ or above on the legibility rubric, rated by his teacher, aide or therapist in the classroom or therapy setting across three consecutive trials, by the end of his IEP year as observed by school staff or the occupational therapist.
3. So that Gemma can develop her literacy skills and record her ideas in written form, she will write 3 of her creative sentences, using adapted paper and with one verbal cue, that score ___ or above on the legibility rubric, in her classroom setting, rated by the teacher, Gemma or therapist, across three trials by the end of her 10 weeks of support with the OT.
4. So that Faisal can increase the automation of recording his ideas and answers to questions, he will write at least two sentences, using his favorite writing tool in his favorite color that scores ___ or above on the legibility rubric, rated by his teacher, aide, or therapist in the classroom or therapy setting two of three trials, by the end of his IEP year as observed by school staff or the occupational therapist.
5. So that he can increase his participation in circle time, which he loves, Stubby will use a weighted lap pad, vibrating pillow, or another sensory support he chooses to sit for at least 5 minutes at least 2 times a week for three consecutive weeks by his periodic review and 4 times a week by the end of his IEP year as observed by school staff or occupational therapist.

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6. So she can increase her participation in classroom activities, Juniper will attend to at least 30 seconds of a classroom art activity, using her preferred headphones or other environmental supports if she needs them, at least 2 times a week for three consecutive weeks by the end of 10 weeks of service with the OT as observed by school staff or occupational therapist. (Burst of service model)

7. Taz will demonstrate peer-level cutting skills by moving from being able to cut on a straight 6 inches long, ¼-inch-wide line with no deviations to be able to cut on a 6 inch ¼ inch-wide curved line (or include the exact shape to be used as a measure, for instance,, the Schoodles fish) with no more than two deviations on 3 of 4 trials, using spring scissors, by the end of the IEP year as observed by school staff or occupational therapist.

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Functional/ Strengths-Based Goal Rubric

Item	2 points	1 point	0 points	Score
1. Does the goal include a student strength, skill or motivator?		The goal includes a student strength, skill .	The goal does not include a student strength.	
2. Does the goal target a specific classroom skill and what the student needs to be able to do?	The goal clearly targets a classroom skill AND what the student needs to be able to do.	The goal targets a classroom skill OR what the student needs to be able to do.	The goal does not clearly target a classroom skill or what the student needs to be able to do.	
3. Does the goal provide evidence of global participation/ occupation-based targets vs. isolated skills (i.e., Increased participation with classroom assignments, vs. increased legibility or self-regulation)	The goal provides evidence of global participation/occupation-based targets.	The goal provides evidence of isolated targets.	The goal does not provide evidence of global participation/occupation-based or isolated targets.	
4. Does the goal indicate how the goal will be supported (with whom) and in which environments (where) the skill is to be observed?	The goal clearly indicates with whom AND in which environments the goal will be observed.	The goal clearly indicates with whom the goal will be supported OR where it will be observed.	The goal does not clearly indicate with whom or where the goal will be observed.	
5. Does the goal include support and kinds of supports and/or accommodations? (i.e, executive function supports like visuals, sensory supports, seating, special paper, access to breaks, ways to ask for help if dysregulated or overwhelmed)	The goal clearly indicates a supports AND accommodations.	The goal clearly states supports OR accommodations.	The goal does not state supports or accommodations.	
6. Is the goal measurable?	Evidence of success is clearly measurable.	Some measurements are stated but vague. (90 % of the time)	No measurement of success.	
7. Is the goal attainable within the given timeframe?	The goal is attainable within the stated timeframe.	The goal is attainable but not within the stated timeframe.	The goal is not attainable.	
			Goal Total Score	

Adapted from 'Writing Strengths-Based Goals for Students' by Kim Muza and 'Writing Goals to Foster Autistic Identity' by Rachel Dorse