

Writing Truly Measurable IEP Goals: Beyond “80% Accuracy in 3 of 4 Trials”

Purpose & Overview

Too often, IEP goals are written with vague criteria like “80% accuracy in 3 out of 4 trials.” While technically measurable, this format rarely captures meaningful progress or provides clarity for instruction. A truly measurable goal specifies *what skill, under what conditions, and how mastery will be evaluated*. This worksheet provides practical tools, examples, and quick checks to ensure that every goal you write is measurable, actionable, and aligned with student needs.

Why Measurable Goals Matter

- **Clarity for staff:** Any team member should be able to read the goal and know exactly what to teach and how to measure it.
 - **Accountability:** Measurable goals protect student rights and ensure legal compliance.
 - **Progress tracking:** Vague goals make it difficult to determine growth; measurable goals allow for consistent data collection.
 - **Student benefit:** Well-written goals drive meaningful instruction and build independence.
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Key Elements of a Measurable Goal

Component	What It Means	Example
Skill/Behavior	What the student will do	“Solve multi-step word problems”
Condition	The context, supports, or tools	“Given a graphic organizer and calculator”

Criteria	How mastery is measured	“4 out of 5 problems correct across 3 sessions”
Timeframe	When mastery is expected	“By June 2026”
Measurement Tool	How progress will be tracked	“Curriculum-based probes scored weekly”

Vague vs. Measurable Examples

Vague Goal:

“Student will improve reading comprehension with 80% accuracy.”

Measurable Goal:

“Given a grade-level informational passage and a graphic organizer, the student will answer 8 out of 10 comprehension questions with 80% accuracy across three consecutive probes by June 2026, as measured by teacher-created assessments.”

Quick-Reference Criteria Menu

When writing goals, consider:

- **Accuracy:** percentage of correct responses
 - **Frequency:** number of times behavior occurs
 - **Duration:** length of time student sustains behavior
 - **Latency:** time between prompt and student response
 - **Intensity:** degree of support required
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Common Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them

Pitfall	Better Practice
Relying only on “80% accuracy in 3/4 trials”	Use multiple criteria (e.g., duration, frequency, latency) for precision.
Writing goals that describe teaching, not performance	Focus on what the student will <i>do</i> , not what the teacher will <i>provide</i> .
Skipping baseline data	Always state “from a baseline of ____” to show starting point.
Overloading goals with multiple skills	Break big skills into objectives or benchmarks.

Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

1. Review one of your current student’s IEP goals.
2. Ask: Does it clearly define skill, condition, criteria, timeframe, and measurement tool?
3. Rewrite the goal using at least **two different measurement criteria** (e.g., accuracy *and* duration).
4. Share your revision with a colleague and compare clarity.