



## TRANSCRIPT

Hello, and welcome to English Fluency Now Podcast Episode #50!

My name is Lisa and this is the English Fluency Now podcast, a podcast which will help you improve your English by listening to authentic English spoken by American English speakers. The podcast covers topics related to everyday life, business, education, travel and a variety of other interesting topics.

To get the Lesson Guide for this episode, go to my website [www.englishfluencynow.com](http://www.englishfluencynow.com) and click on the products page. The Lesson Guide has the complete transcript, so you can read along while you listen. It also has other helpful learning materials, such as comprehension questions, definitions for more than 25 vocabulary words used in the podcast and sample sentences, and links to more videos and articles related to today's topic.

Also on the website, you can sign up for my free email course: “7 Strategies for English Fluency”. The course gives you 7 lessons about things you need to do to become fluent in English.

Okay, let's begin!

In today's episode, I want to talk about the idea of setting goals and whether or not it is a good thing to do. New Year's Eve is **right around the corner** (in fact, it's tonight) and this is a traditional time **to take stock of** what you have done in the past year and make plans for the next year.

Usually, people speak in terms of making New Year's Resolutions, and more recently, success-oriented folks talk about setting and tracking goals. As you probably know, people are **notorious** for not being able **to stick with** their New Year's Resolutions.

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Have you ever made a New Year’s Resolution, to say, lose some weight, only to find that by Valentine’s Day you have actually gained a couple of pounds? What happened?

On January 1, you **resolved** to lose 10 pounds, and you started off all **gung-ho**, going to the gym, eating salads for dinner, **skipping** dessert. Then, about three weeks or even a month into it, if you were lucky, you started to **go back to your old tricks**, finally **giving up** altogether.

Okay, no big deal. New Year’s Resolutions are sort of for fun anyway. It’s like it’s a nice idea, and if you can do it great, but if you can’t, there’s always next year.

So, for many, making a New Year’s Resolution is sort of a fun tradition and a nice idea, but not necessarily something you stick with for very long. And that’s usually okay for most people. It has become sort of a joke, really.

As you may recognize from these examples, New Year’s Resolutions are generally **vague**. They sound something like this:

- I want to lose weight.
- I want to be fluent in Spanish.
- I want to learn how to knit.
- I want to travel more.
- I want to get outside in nature, more often.
- I want to get regular exercise.

Some people argue that the vagueness is what leads to the failure and stick with your plans; because you basically don’t have a plan. How are you going to lose some weight or exercise more? What does that even mean, specifically?

Modern-day, success-**oriented** people, on the other hand, believe they have found the secret to success, and that is to set specific, realistic goals and track them.

But before we go into that, just what is a goal, anyway?

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Well, basically, a goal is a desired result. It is something that you plan for and commit to achieving at some future date. Many people **endeavor to** reach goals within a finite time by giving themselves a **deadline**.

In my experience, setting a goal and creating a plan for how you are going to achieve that goal can help you reach it. People do this all the time and it can work.

You say to yourself, this week I am going to finish this project by Thursday morning. Well, you either do or you don't, but if you made a realistic and specific goal, and gave yourself a deadline, and maybe even a **consequence** for not reaching your goal, then you were likely able to meet it.

Setting and tracking specific goals is a common personal growth practice these days, and in terms of setting goals for an entire year, it could look something like this.

Instead of saying, I want to improve my English this year, you could say *I want to read 5 books in English by June* or *I want to take the TOEFL exam and get a 26 on the speaking section* or *I want to speak to someone in English for at least one hour per week about politics and the economy*.

You have the desired result, the time period for achieving it and now you can make a plan of action.

But, what I've noticed is that even when people make realistic and specific goals, they don't always achieve them, and a lot of times, they end up feeling **frustrated** and depressed and they tend **to beat themselves up** for not **following through with** their plans and not achieving their “goals”. Sometimes, they **go to the extreme** and give up altogether and feel really disappointed with themselves, **berating** themselves for being lazy, not smart enough, etc.

Another perspective, in terms of personal growth and achievement in your life, is to not make goals, and to not make any plans, but rather to let **inspiration** drive you.

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This is a controversial issue, so I provide links to articles and videos that talk about each side of this debate in the Lesson Guide, but the idea of not setting any goals is certainly **worthy of consideration**.

That is, what if, instead of saying that in the next year you are going to:

1. Lose 15 pounds by June.
2. Run a half-marathon by October.
3. Read 100 books in the year, and
4. Paint your bedroom and kitchen by May...

...you just do what inspires you the most, in the moment. What would that look like for you?

The idea is that goals are for people who are *not truly motivated* to do the things they say they want to do. They have an idea in their mind of the person they want to be and they decide what types of things they want to achieve to be that person, and then they try to motivate themselves to do a variety of things.

When a person is truly inspired, they don't need motivational techniques, such as goal setting.

In his book, [Goals Suck: Why the Obsession with Goal-Setting is a Flawed Approach to Productivity and Life in General](#), author Matt Stone argues that in order to be super productive in both your personal and professional life, you must “do whatever the fuck you wanna do”. (That's a direct quote.)

In the book, he tells us of his own history as a **former** goal-oriented person, which started when he was a young adolescent boy wanting to be super fit and muscular. To do this, he set goals for how many push-ups to do and how many miles to run, but then, when he was unable to stick to his plan and reach his goals, he began to hate himself and even the idea of working out.

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Throughout his 20s and 30s he had the same experiences over and over again: setting goals, working hard to achieve them, meeting some of them and **falling off the wagon** with others, but ultimately losing interest in the things he had previously loved so much, such as skiing, hiking and cooking.

Rather than doing things just for pleasure, he always tried to improve his skills and achieve more, sometimes pushing himself to the extreme.

In the book, he walks the reader through the personal philosophical evolution that has led him to his current **conclusion**, that “goals are not only a **suboptimal** solution to a productivity and focus problem, but in fact suck.”

Stone claims that not having any goals has allowed him to be **freakishly** productive, and able to maintain a higher level of life satisfaction and well-being. In his book, he lists all the things he did in one year, without setting any goals; he was extremely productive.

He started three new businesses while **running** another, wrote and published eight books, narrated 53 books for [audible.com](https://www.audible.com), created 7 websites, recorded and published 25 podcasts, hired and helped train 20 people, and much more; he even **squeezed in** a two-month vacation.

His main argument is that if you are setting goals for yourself, you are probably not doing what you really enjoy doing, and if you find the thing in your life that you are passionate about, you will naturally want to do more of it and you will thus become quite productive and happy.

How do you know what you are passionate about?

Pay attention to the things that you **are drawn to** naturally, without anybody making you be interested in them or telling you that you have to do this or that.

What are the books that you find yourself reading all the time, finishing them without any effort and in a short period of time? What do you like to talk about with your family and friends? What do you do when you are completely free to do whatever you want?

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These are the things you are passionate about, and if you focus on doing these things, you will be productive and happy, without setting goals.

The problem is that we are often doing things that we don't enjoy very much or even value.

This happens with learning English as well.

The best English students are always the ones who love English. They don't need to set goals for themselves, because they actually want to listen to podcasts, watch movies, read books, talk to people, and immerse themselves in the English language as much as possible. They do it naturally and don't necessarily need to track their time and their accomplishments, like how many sentences they read each day or how many minutes they speak each week.

I once had a student who was asked how he had learned English so well without leaving his country. The other students were so impressed and they wanted to know his “secrets”. He told them that he spent up to 10 hours or more per day watching CNN, TV series and movies, and that he read anything he could find in English. He was doing this while living through a war in Iraq and working. English had obviously been a passion for him, not a **chore** or a requirement for school or work. His English was quite excellent, despite the fact that he had never spent time in an English-speaking country. He didn't need to set goals; he just did what he enjoyed and he had great success in that area.

So, should you set goals or not?

I guess you basically have to figure out what really works for you.

If you are a naturally inspired person and find it easy to focus on the things you love, especially in your personal life, but hopefully also in your work life, then you probably don't have to set goals, because you will already be doing so many interesting and exciting things, that you will be productive and enjoy yourself in the process of living and **pursuing** your interests.

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But if, on the other hand, you find that you aren't really that inspired to do certain things in life (like getting exercise, improving your English or losing weight), but you think you want or should do these things, and that your life would be better if you could do these things, then you might try setting some goals and give yourself a deadline, a time period in which to complete the goal, and perhaps even a consequence for not achieving your goal.

In the end, it is something that we all must figure out for ourselves.

What things are important in life and how do we want to make sure we achieve them? Do we just follow our interests or do we need to set goals, make plans and track our progress?

What do you think?

Will you be making some New Year's Resolutions, setting some goals or will you just focus on doing whatever you want, whatever you feel inspired to do? Please, share your thoughts in the comments section of the blog post for this episode.

Whatever you decide to do, I wish you all a very Happy New Year with lots of success, health and happiness in the new year, and always.

Well, that's all for today.

Thank you for listening to the English Fluency Now podcast. I hope you have enjoyed it. Remember, repetition is key, so I recommend that you listen to the podcast several times over the next few days. Get the Lesson Guide if you want to read along with the transcript and use this podcast to study this topic more in depth.

If you want to improve your speaking skills, pick up a copy of my course, [Success with Stories](#). It trains you to speak English automatically, without thinking and without translating in your head. You can find out more about the Success with Stories course and listen to some sample lessons at [www.englishfluencynow.com](http://www.englishfluencynow.com).

Thank you, and until next time, be well!

**English Fluency Now Podcast Episode #50 - “Goals or No Goals?”**

**A goal is a dream with a deadline. — Napoleon Hill**



**The trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never score. — Bill Copeland**

1. Goals Propel You Forward
2. Goals Transform Insurmountable Mountains Into Walkable Hills
3. Goals Help Us Believe In Ourselves
4. Goals Hold You Accountable For Failure
5. Goals Tell You What You Truly Want
6. Goals Help Us Live Life To The Fullest

**Do you agree?**

**<http://www.keepinspiring.me/why-you-need-to-set-goals/>**

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**VOCABULARY WORDS** (v=verb, n=noun, adj=adjective, adv=adverb, phv=phrasal verb)

**right around the corner:** *to be happening soon; to be coming up soon*

My mother's birthday is right around the corner and I have no idea what to get her.

**to take stock of:** *to look at and consider; to think carefully about something*

The judge told the accused to take stock of what he had done and be prepared to pay for his actions.

**notorious (adj):** *to be famous for something, but in a somewhat negative way*

His boss was notorious for firing people without any warning.

**to stick with something:** *to continue working on something; to keep doing something*

Even though it can be tough, successful athletes stick with their workout routine no matter what.

**to resolve to do something:** *to decide to do something; to make a resolution...*

She resolved to never yell at her kids again, and her kids were happy about that.

**to be gung-ho about something:** *to be excited about something*

The boys were all gung-ho about getting the new Call of Duty game for Christmas.

**to skip something:** *to not partake of something or do something; to not have something you might usually have*

She was running late this morning so she skipped breakfast and was starving by noon.

**to go back to your old tricks:** *to return to doing something the way you used to do it*

Even though her husband had been sober for five years, it looked like he was going back to his old tricks, drinking too much with his co-workers on Friday evenings.

**to give up (phv):** *to stop doing something; to quit*

She had been learning how to drive a car, but when she got into the accident, she just gave up.

**vague (adj):** *unclear, not detailed*

The witness was very vague about what had actually happened the night of the crime.

**oriented (adj):** *to be into something; your relation to something*

He is a very goal-oriented person. He uses five different apps to track his different goals in the areas of health, fitness, language learning, food and productivity.

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**to endeavor to do something:** *to start to do something*

He is going to endeavor to learn how to scuba dive this summer.

**deadline (n):** *the time by which something must be completed*

Their boss told them that he could not extend the deadline, and that they'd have to finish by tomorrow evening.

**consequence (n):** *something that happens as a result of something else; a punishment*

She didn't want to think about the consequences of turning in her final paper late.

**frustrated (adj):** *upset, annoyed, irritated*

He was frustrated that his father had forgotten to come pick him up from the pool.

**to beat yourself up:** *to say mean things to yourself to punish yourself for not doing something right*

She is always beating herself up for not exercising enough. I told her to stop doing that.

**to go to the extreme:** *to do something in an extreme way*

Some surfers in Hawaii are always going the extreme, surfing the hugest waves. It scares me.

**to berate (v):** *to yell at someone for doing something; to punish; to talk negatively; to scold*

He is afraid that his boss is going to berate him in front of his colleagues for screwing up the deal.

**inspiration (n):** *the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative*

She says that she gets her inspiration for her art from being out in nature.

**to be worthy of consideration:** *to be valuable enough to think about*

Their proposal is certainly worthy of consideration, but I don't know if my boss will approve of it.

**obsession (n):** *something that you can't stop thinking about or doing*

He has an unusual obsession with guns. It's sort of weird.

**flawed (adj):** *messed up, imperfect, unsound*

We are going to return this computer because it is flawed; the hard drive doesn't work.

**approach (n):** *a way of doing something; a strategy*

Her approach to fitness is simple - she walks 30 minutes per day.

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**former (adj):** *to describe someone who used to do something*

She is a former volleyball star, but today she works as a teacher.

**to fall off the wagon:** *to stop doing something that you said you wanted to do*

He was doing really well on his diet, and had already lost 10 pounds, but at Christmastime he fell off the wagon and ate every dessert in sight.

**suboptimal (adj):** *of less than the highest standard or quality*

I think this car has a suboptimal engine. It doesn't have enough power for the size of the car.

**freakishly (adj):** *strange or abnormal*

He is having a freakishly amazing year; he has already made \$1 million.

**to run a business:** *to manage a business*

He runs his father's business and one of his own. He is a busy guy.

**to squeeze in (phv):** *to fit something in*

The hairdresser said she'd be able to squeeze me in at 5:00 p.m. Thank goodness!

**to be drawn to something:** *to like something; to have an affinity toward something*

She has been drawn to horses ever since she was a young child.

**to be a chore:** *when something feels like work or is unpleasant to do*

For a long time she thought that math was a chore, and she never enjoyed doing it. But luckily, in high school, she had a really great Algebra 2 teacher and she fell in love with math and went on to become a computer science major in college.

**to pursue (v):** *to do; to go after something; to follow a course of study*

She has decided not to pursue a degree in medicine; she wants to become a film director instead.

**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS - Did you understand what you heard/read?**

1. Sometimes people \_\_\_\_\_ New Year’s Resolutions, but don’t \_\_\_\_\_ them?
  - a. do, finish
  - b. make, keep
  - c. making, keeping
  - d. hate, like
  
2. To achieve a goal, some people like to \_\_\_\_\_ their goals?
  - a. forget about
  - b. talk about
  - c. track
  - d. stop
  
3. What is Matt Stone’s advice?
  - a. do whatever the fuck you want
  - b. work hard every day
  - c. set 10 goals each year
  - d. watch more TV
  
4. What is a drawback of setting goals?
  - a. you turn something you love to do into a competition and you lose interest
  - b. you achieve them
  - c. you work harder than necessary
  - d. you waste your time

**True or False**

5. People who set goals always achieve them.
6. Just because you set a goal doesn’t mean you will reach it.
7. Setting goals can be a good motivator for making a plan of action.
8. If you don’t achieve your goal, you are a loser.
9. Some people do set goals, track them and achieve them within a certain time period.
10. You have to figure out for yourself whether setting goals works for you.

## EXPANSION QUESTIONS

*This is your turn to interact with the content and use English in a real way.*

*Answer with complete sentences.*

1. Have you ever set goals in your life? Did you achieve them?
2. Does it bother you not to achieve your goal?
3. Do you think it is possible to be happy without setting goals?
4. Will you set some goals for the next year or not?

If you are interested in improving your writing, make sure you answer these questions completely and then work with a tutor or someone who can check your answers.

These are also good questions to use as **conversation starters** when working with a tutor or language exchange partner.

## OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Quotes related to goals

Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude. ~ Thomas Jefferson

Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment. ~ Jim Rohn

When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps. ~ Confucius

Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible. ~ Tony Robbins

The game has its ups and downs, but you can never lose focus of your individual goals and you can't let yourself be beat because of lack of effort. ~ Michael Jordan

Crystallize your goals. Make a plan for achieving them and set yourself a deadline. Then, with supreme confidence, determination and disregard for obstacles and other people's criticisms, carry out your plan. ~ Paul J. Meyer

If you set goals and go after them with all the determination you can muster, your gifts will take you places that will amaze you. ~ Les Brown

I will keep smiling, be positive and never give up! I will give 100 percent each time I play. These are always my goals and my attitude. ~ Yani Tseng

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/goals.html#cmHHTL3rlsSQTyZL.99>

[Tim Ferriss and Napoleon Hill: Setting Goals](#)

## ANSWERS

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 2. C  |
| 3. A | 4. A  |
| 5. F | 6. T  |
| 7. T | 8. F  |
| 9. T | 10. T |

### EXPANSION QUESTIONS (possible answers - your answers may vary)

1. Have you ever set goals in your life? Did you achieve them?

*Yes, I have set goals, and sometimes I have achieved them and sometimes not.*

*No, I never set goals. I just do what I like.*

2. Does it bother you not to achieve your goal?

*Yes, I feel really frustrated if I do not achieve my goal. I feel like I have let myself down.*

*No, it doesn't bother me. It's okay, just as long as I tried.*

3. Do you think it is possible to be happy without setting goals?

*Yes, sure. You don't need to set goals to be happy, you just need to do what you love.*

*No, to be truly happy you need to set goals and achieve them; otherwise, you won't be motivated to achieve anything important in your life.*

4. Will you set some goals for the next year or not?

*Yes, I have already made a list of my goals and now I must make a plan of action. These are the things that I want to do in the new year: read 6 books in English, run 10 miles per week, visit Spain.*

*No, I don't have any goals. I am just going to do the things that I enjoy and have fun.*



## English Fluency Now Podcast Episode #50 - “Goals or No Goals?”

Here are some resources related to the topic of language learning that you might find interesting.

### Articles

[Tim Ferriss vs Leo Babauta: Showdown on whether goals suck](#)

[Let's Be Honest - Goals Suck](#)

[4 Ugly Facts about Setting Goals](#)

[What I Learned About Money and More in 2014](#)

[How to Set Goals](#)

[Keep A New Year's Resolution](#)

[An Almost Foolproof Way to Achieve Every Goal You Set](#)

### Videos

[Interview with Matt Stone](#)

[If you want to achieve your goals, don't focus on them:](#) Reggie Rivers

[How to find and do work you love:](#) Scott Dinsmore

[Tony Robbins - The Power of Goals](#)

[Why Goals Suck](#)

What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals. ~ Henry David Thoreau