



Understanding IEP Goals

What They Mean
and How to Know if
They're Good

*A Practical Guide to Understanding
Your Child's IEP Goals*

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WHAT IS AN IEP GOAL?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) goal describes a skill your child is expected to learn or improve over the course of the school year.

These goals are based on your child's:

- Current strengths
- Areas of need
- Evaluation results
- Classroom performance
- Input from the IEP team—including you.

A well-written goal provides a clear roadmap for instruction and allows everyone involved to monitor your child's progress.



THE 4-QUESTION CHECKLIST

Every IEP Goal Should Answer These Four Questions

✓ 1. What skill is being taught?

Can you clearly identify what your child is expected to learn?

✓ 2. How will progress be measured?

Will progress be measured through:

- Classroom observations
- Data collection
- Work samples
- Teacher records
- Therapy sessions
- Assessments



THE 4-QUESTION CHECKLIST

Every IEP Goal Should Answer These Four Questions

3. What does success look like?

Does the goal include a measurable target such as:

- 80% accuracy
- 4 out of 5 opportunities
- Three consecutive sessions

4. When should the goal be achieved?

Most annual IEP goals are expected to be achieved within one year.

Quick Tip: If you can't answer these four questions after reading a goal, ask the IEP team for clarification.



RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR

Watch for These Common Red Flags

- 🚩 The goal is too vague.
- 🚩 You don't understand how progress will be measured.
- 🚩 The goal doesn't match your child's current needs.
- 🚩 The goal doesn't reflect your child's Present Levels of Performance.
- 🚩 The goal sounds like it could belong to any student.
- 🚩 There are too many goals to realistically focus on during the school year.

Remember: It's okay to ask the team to explain, revise, or clarify a goal. Asking questions is part of being an active member of the IEP team.



QUESTIONS EVERY PARENT CAN ASK

Bring these questions with you to your next IEP meeting:

- Can you explain this goal in everyday language?
- Why was this goal chosen?
- How will progress be measured?
- How often will I receive updates?
- What instruction or support will help my child reach this goal?
- What happens if my child reaches the goal early?
- What happens if my child is not making expected progress?
- Can we revise the goal if my child's needs change?

Parent Tip: You don't have to ask every question. Choose the ones that help you better understand your child's IEP.



EXAMPLE: WEAK GOAL VS. STRONG GOAL

✗ Weak Goal

"The student will improve reading."

What's missing?

- Specific skill
- Measurement
- Clear target
- Timeline

✓ Strong Goal

"Given a second-grade reading passage, the student will answer five comprehension questions with at least 80% accuracy in three out of four opportunities by the annual review date."

Why is this stronger?

- ✓ Clearly identifies the skill
- ✓ Explains how progress will be measured
- ✓ Defines what success looks like
- ✓ Includes a timeline



REVIEW YOUR CHILD'S GOALS

For each goal, ask yourself:

Goal #1

Do I understand the skill being taught?

Yes No

How is progress measured?

What questions do I have?



REVIEW YOUR CHILD'S GOALS

For each goal, ask yourself:

Goal #2

Do I understand the skill being taught?

Yes No

How is progress measured?

What questions do I have?



REVIEW YOUR CHILD'S GOALS

For each goal, ask yourself:

Goal #3

Do I understand the skill being taught?

Yes No

How is progress measured?

What questions do I have?



FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Remember...

You don't have to become a special education expert overnight.

Every question you ask helps you become a more informed and confident advocate for your child.

Understanding your child's IEP goals allows you to:

- Monitor progress throughout the year.
- Partner effectively with the school team.
- Celebrate your child's growth.
- Speak up when additional support may be needed.

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Thank you for allowing Liberated Hands to be part of your advocacy journey.