



Overview of **Goal** **Attainment Scaling**



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Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) is a method used to measure the achievement of specific individualised goals, particularly in clinical and educational settings. It provides a structured way to set personalised goals and objectively evaluate the degree to which these goals are achieved.

Key features of GAS

Individualised goals: GAS is tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the individual. Goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

- **Five-point scale:** Each goal is rated on a five-point scale, typically ranging from much less than expected to much more than expected:
 - **-2:** Much less than expected outcome
 - **-1:** Less than expected outcome
 - **0:** Expected level of outcome (the goal)
 - **+1:** More than expected outcome
 - **+2:** Much more than expected outcome
- **Collaborative process:** Setting goals and defining the scale is often a collaborative process involving the individual, caregivers and professionals to ensure that the goals are meaningful and realistic.
- **Quantifiable measurement:** GAS allows for the quantification of progress towards each goal, providing a clear and objective way to track and report outcomes.

Steps in GAS

Identify goals: Collaboratively identify specific goals that are important to the individual. These should be realistic and achievable within a specified time frame.

1. **Define expected outcomes:** Clearly define what the expected level of achievement (0 on the scale) looks like.
2. **Develop scale descriptors:** Describe what less than expected (-1, -2) and more than expected (+1, +2) outcomes would look like for each goal. These descriptors should be specific and observable.
3. **Implement interventions:** Carry out the interventions or strategies designed to help the individual achieve their goals.
4. **Evaluate progress:** At the end of the specified period, assess the individual's progress using the five-point scale. This can be done through observations, assessments or other relevant measures.
5. **Analyse and interpret results:** Use the ratings to evaluate overall goal attainment. This analysis can inform future goal setting and intervention planning.

Benefits of GAS

- **Personalisation:** Allows for highly individualised goal setting.
- **Objectivity:** Provides a structured and objective way to measure progress.
- **Flexibility:** Can be used across various settings and populations, including clinical, educational and research environments.
- **Outcome focused:** Helps focus interventions on meaningful and measurable outcomes.

Goal Attainment Scaling example

Context

A child in a classroom setting is having difficulty staying focused on assigned tasks. The teacher and parents collaboratively decide to use GAS to track progress in this area.

Goal: Improve the child's ability to stay on task during independent work time.

Goal and scale

Overall goal: The child will stay on task during independent work periods.

Scale descriptors

- **-2 (Much less than expected outcome):** The child stays on task for less than 25% of the independent work time.
- **-1 (Less than expected outcome):** The child stays on task for 25–50% of the independent work time.
- **0 (Expected level of outcome):** The child stays on task for 50–75% of the independent work time.
- **+1 (More than expected outcome):** The child stays on task for 75–90% of the independent work time.
- **+2 (Much more than expected outcome):** The child stays on task for more than 90% of the independent work time.

Steps in implementing GAS

1. **Identify goals**
 - **Goal:** Improve on-task behaviour during independent work periods.
 - **Time frame:** Over the next six weeks.
2. **Define expected outcomes**
 - The expected level of outcome (0) is that the child will stay on task for 50–75% of the independent work time.
3. **Develop scale descriptors**
 - Detailed descriptors for each level of attainment from much less than expected (-2) to much more than expected (+2).
4. **Implement interventions**
 - **Intervention strategies**
 - **Visual schedule:** Provide a visual schedule outlining the independent work period and the activities to be completed.
 - **Task cards:** Break down tasks into smaller, manageable steps with task cards.
 - **Positive reinforcement:** Use a token economy system where the child earns tokens for staying on task, which can be exchanged for a preferred activity or item.
 - **Timer:** Use a visual timer to help the child understand how long they need to stay on task.

- **Sensory breaks:** Schedule short sensory breaks to help the child manage their focus and energy levels.

5. Evaluate progress

- **Observation and data collection:** The teacher will observe and record the percentage of time the child stays on task during independent work periods each day.

6. Analyse and interpret results:

- At mid-year, the teacher reviews the data and rates the child's progress using the five-point scale.

Evaluation example

After six weeks of implementing the interventions:

• Observation Data:

- Week 1: 30% on task
- Week 2: 40% on task
- Week 3: 55% on task
- Week 4: 60% on task
- Week 5: 65% on task
- Week 6: 70% on task

- **Rating:** Based on the collected data, the child was on task for 50–75% of the independent work time in the last three weeks, which aligns with the expected level of outcome (0).

Resources

Download the template for recording and measuring GAS goals and progress:

<https://theloop.aspect.org.au/ArticleDocuments/1200/GAS%20template.doc.aspx?Embed=Y>

Read more about GAS:

https://theloop.aspect.org.au/ArticleDocuments/1200/Roach%20and%20Elliott_practitioner%20friendly%20GAS%20article.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y