

Picture This!

Determining Personal Vision

Objectives

- A** Describe what it means to have a vision.
- B** Determine your personal vision.



1375 King Avenue, P.O. Box 12279, Columbus, Ohio 43212-0279

Ph: (614) 486-6708 Fax: (614) 486-1819

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“What do you want to be when you grow up?” You’ve probably heard this question hundreds of times at this point

So What

in your life. Maybe you’ve known from a very young age what career path you would follow—or maybe you still have no idea! Either way, planning for your future is an important part of being a student. You may feel overwhelmed by all of the tough decisions that you will face in the next few years. Creating a personal vision for your future can help you make those decisions. A vision serves as a guidebook for your life, motivating and inspiring you as you work toward achieving your goals.



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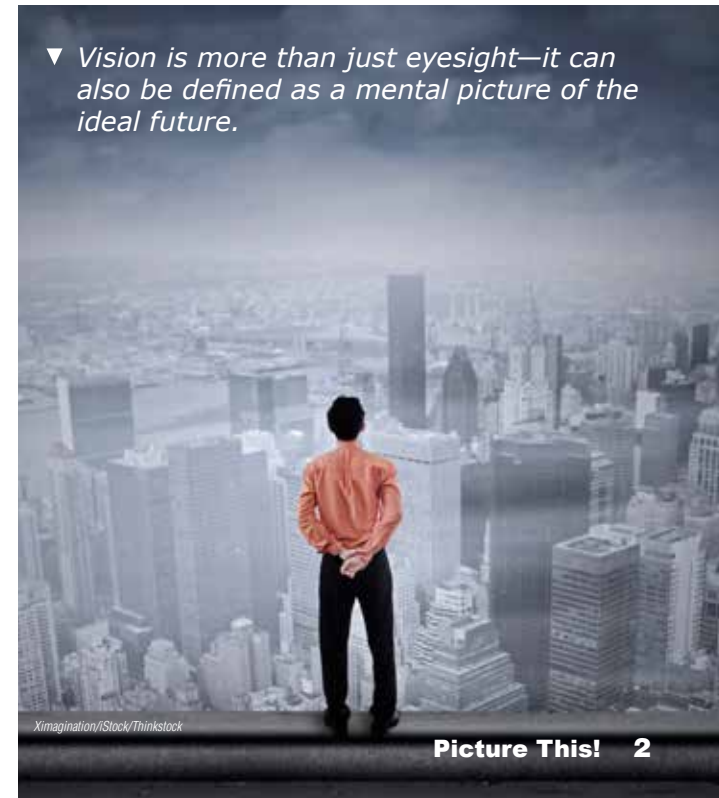
Imagining Your Future

What Is Vision?

“Sight is the ability to see things as they are; vision is the capacity to see things as they could be.” But aren’t sight and vision the same thing? It depends on what type of vision you’re talking about! When you go to the eye doctor for a checkup, the doctor might ask you to read a list of letters, point out raised numbers in a book, or describe what you see on a screen. These activities are all designed to evaluate your eyesight, often referred to as your vision.

There’s actually *another* type of vision—one that has nothing to do with your physical ability to see at all. **Vision** can also be defined as a mental picture of the ideal future. Organizations and businesses often have visions that explain what type of future they want to create through their work. These visions usually describe a future that is improved or enhanced because of what the organization has accomplished. For example, the Hilton hotel chain has a vision “to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality,” and the environmental organization The Nature Conservancy hopes to “leave a sustainable world for future generations.”

▼ *Vision is more than just eyesight—it can also be defined as a mental picture of the ideal future.*



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To see the vision statements of more companies and organizations, check out the list “30 Example Vision Statements” from TopNonProfits.org: <https://topnonprofits.com/examples/vision-statements/>.

Organizations aren’t the only ones who can have visions, though. When an individual has a mental picture of his/her own desired life at some point in the future, that person has a **personal vision**. A personal vision is a snapshot of the life that you want to have five, 10, or even 50 years from now. It describes what you hope to accomplish in your career, in your personal life, and in your relationships. Essentially, your personal vision spells out everything you hope to do, experience, and become in your life—and the legacy you will leave behind.

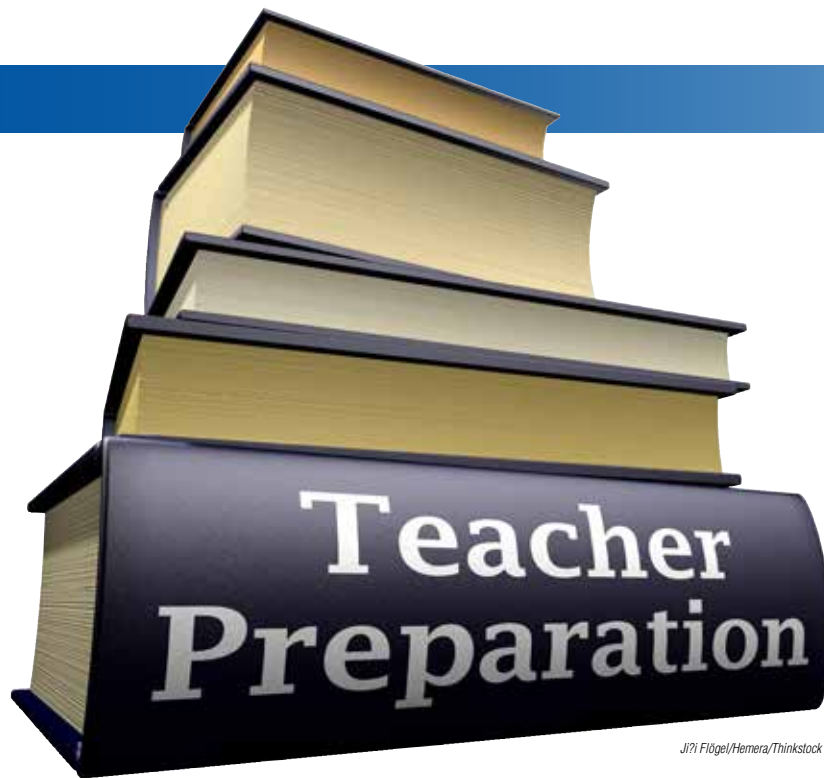
What Vision Isn’t

Personal vision may seem similar to several other concepts that you are familiar with. However, there are important differences to keep in mind. A personal vision is **not**:

A **goal**: A goal is a concrete end result that you hope to achieve. Goals are considered “finished” when they are accomplished, whereas a personal vision is a life-long pursuit with no distinct endpoint. Goals also tend to be more specific and measurable than visions. For example, a part of your personal vision might be to use your cooking abilities to end hunger in your community, whereas one of your goals might be to earn your culinary degree so that you can work as a chef at a homeless shelter. Even though your goals and vision are different, they are closely related. Your goals act as the backbone of your vision; each goal that you complete moves you closer to your desired future.



► Can you think of other goals that might help someone fulfill his/her vision of living in a hunger-free community?



Ji?i Filge/Hemera/Thinkstock

- ◀ *A teacher's mission statement might be "to help students learn by creating lesson plans that are engaging and have real-life value." What do you think the mission statement of a school principal might be?*

A **mission statement**: A mission statement deals with the *now* and *how*—what you are doing in your life right now, and how it is helping you achieve your long-term vision. A personal vision, on the other hand, deals with the future, and shapes your understanding of what you do in the present. A teacher's mission statement might be "to help students learn by creating lesson plans that are engaging and have real-life value." The teacher's personal vision, however, might be "to help improve my community's future by educating the leaders of tomorrow." The mission statement describes daily activities that a teacher performs, whereas the personal vision statement describes the impact that those daily activities will have on the future.



For more information on the differences between a vision statement and a mission statement, check out this YouTube video called "What's the Difference Between Mission and Vision?":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2MyaR0gMo0>.

A Clear Path

Chances are, there will be many instances in your life when you will be confused or conflicted about what to do next. In the next few years alone, you will probably face some tough decisions—do you want to enroll in college, attend technical school, or get a job out of high school? Is a career in the military right for you? Life is full of hard choices. Determining your personal vision can help you make the right ones—the choices that will lead you to the future that you want.

THE GRAY ZONE

Scott has always thought that he would become a doctor when he grew up. Both of his parents are successful pediatricians, and his family expects him to follow the same path. At his high school, Scott has joined biology and anatomy clubs, participated in college preparatory workshops, and researched the best majors for pre-medicine students.

Everything changed for Scott when he signed up for a machine shop course at school as an elective. He realized that he loved the hands-on work, and enjoyed the feeling of accomplishment that he got when he finished building something. Lately, Scott has been feeling conflicted about his career path. He knows that his family wants him to become a doctor, but he thinks he would be happier if he pursued construction or architecture. What do you think Scott should do?

Having a personal vision allows you to set goals that fully align with your ultimate ambitions, making seemingly tough decisions much easier. For example, if your personal vision involves working to cure cancer, an appropriate goal would be to get accepted to medical school. You wouldn't make it your goal to get accepted to law school or religious seminary, because those goals do not align with your personal vision. As you can see, having a personal vision ensures that you are spending your time and efforts on pursuits that are truly important to you.

Having a personal vision can also help you live a more meaningful life. Many people believe that every individual has a unique purpose—a reason for existing. Perhaps you have wondered about your own specific purpose, but were unable to figure it out. Determining and pursuing a personal vision can help you discover that purpose—why you're here, and what you're working toward. By understanding your purpose, you can live a more fulfilling and satisfying life with the knowledge that your hard work is driven by something greater than a paycheck or a good grade on an exam.



▲ *If your personal vision involved becoming a doctor, one of your goals would likely be to get accepted to medical school.*



To learn more about the benefits of finding your purpose, check out this article titled "How a Sense of Purpose Can Help You Live Longer" from *Psychology Today*: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/media-spotlight/201507/how-sense-purpose-can-help-you-live-longer>.

The Fine Print

So what's in a personal vision, anyways? The truth is, everybody's personal vision is just that—personal! Your vision may look very different than your best friend's vision, for example. However, every personal vision should address the following things:

- 1. Your career:** What type of career do you hope to have in the future? What do you hope to achieve in that career?
- 2. Your family life:** Your personal vision should describe your ideal family life, including your hopes regarding marriage, children, and your relationships with your own parents and siblings.
- 3. Your social life/personal relationships:** Do you hope to have a few close friends, or a large social circle? Do you hope to meet new people often, or stick with the friends you already have?
- 4. Your role in your community/world:** Your personal vision should address the impact you hope to have through your various roles in life: employee, mother/father, daughter/son, sibling, friend, citizen, volunteer... the list could go on forever!

Your personal vision should also demonstrate your core values—the things you consider most important in life—and reflect your unique strengths and talents. For example, if you value commitment to family, hard work, and helping others, your personal vision should reflect how you hope to live out those values in the future. And if you are talented with machines or especially good with young children, then your personal vision should reflect how you will use those skills in your career or personal life. Lastly, your personal vision should be a source of motivation and inspiration to you. It should challenge you to work hard and to make decisions that keep you on the path to success. Your vision should make you excited for your future—and confident in your ability to get there!



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Summary

A vision is a mental picture of the ideal future. Organizations and businesses often create visions that describe the future that they want to create through their work. When an individual has a mental picture of his/her desired future life, it is called a personal vision. A personal vision is different from a goal—a goal is a concrete end result that a person hopes to achieve, whereas a personal vision is a lifelong pursuit with no endpoint. A personal vision is also different from a mission statement—a mission statement deals with the present, whereas a personal vision deals with the future. Personal visions serve as guidebooks for life, helping individuals set goals that align with their true ambitions. A personal vision can also help an individual discover his/her purpose, leading to a more fulfilling and satisfying life. A personal vision should describe all aspects of an individual's future life, including career, family, social life, and his/her role in the community and world. A personal vision should also address an individual's core values and unique strengths and talents. Lastly, a personal vision should be inspirational and motivational.

TOTAL RECALL

1. What does it mean to have a vision?
2. Why do organizations and companies create visions?
3. Describe two benefits of having a personal vision.
4. What four things should all personal visions address?

Steps to Success

What's Your Vision?

Now that you know what a personal vision is—and the many benefits of having one—you may be wondering how to determine your own. Before you begin gathering your thoughts, it is important to remember that each person's vision is unique and reflects his/her own goals, strengths, and core values. Your personal vision should be meaningful to you, not to your family, your teachers, or your friends. A personal vision can only help you if it accurately reflects what *you* want from life—not what other people want for you.

It is also important to be realistic when determining your personal vision. Be honest with yourself about your strengths and weaknesses. If you know that English is not your strongest subject, for example, then you might want to think again before you craft a personal vision that involves becoming an author! Your personal vision should describe your dream life, but it should still be based in reality. You'll only set yourself up for disappointment by envisioning a future that doesn't align with what you can realistically achieve through hard work and discipline.

- ▶ *It is important to be realistic about your strengths and weaknesses when determining your personal vision.*



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Getting It on Paper

Determining your personal vision is a serious activity—one that requires deep contemplation about your life. You should head to a quiet place where you know you will not be disturbed for at least 30 minutes. Making notes on a sheet of paper or a computer as you go, begin by reflecting carefully on your core values, your career and personal goals, and your unique strengths and talents. One effective way to do this is by answering the following questions:

1. What are your favorite things to do?
2. What are your five most important values?
3. If you never had to work a day in your life, how would you spend your time?
4. When you are old, what will you regret not seeing, doing, or achieving?
5. What problems in the world do you wish you could change?
6. What are you good at?
7. What motivates you to get up in the morning?
8. What do you want to be remembered for?



► *Thinking about your dream job can help you determine your personal vision.*

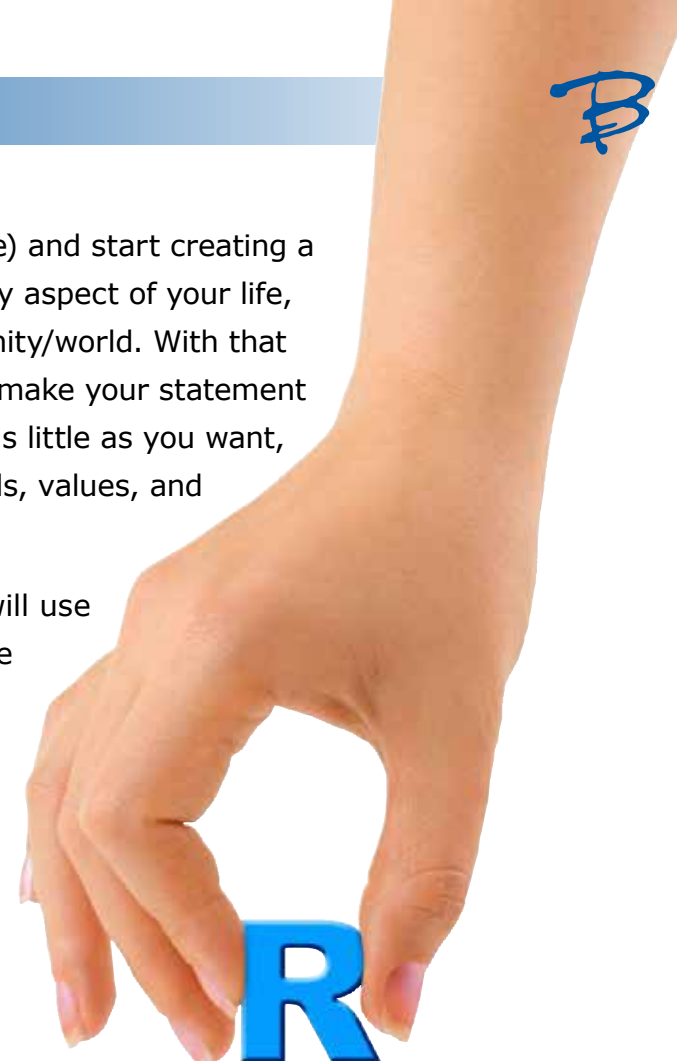
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Once you have gathered your thoughts, pick a future date (10 years from now, for example) and start creating a mental image of what you want your life to look like at that point in time. Think about every aspect of your life, remembering to address your future career, family life, social life, and role in your community/world. With that mental image in mind, start writing your personal vision statement. Use “I” statements to make your statement personal and future tense to reinforce your commitment to your vision. Write as much or as little as you want, making sure that your statements are meaningful and genuine reflections of your true goals, values, and ambitions. To help you get started, here is an example of a personal vision statement:

“I will be a loving wife, a nurturing mother, and an active volunteer in my community. I will use my talent for writing as a journalist, educating and informing people about issues that are important to me, including poverty, education, and environmentalism. I will be a faithful friend who is always willing to lend a helping hand. I will prioritize my physical and mental health and make time for reading, hiking, and traveling.”

Notice that this personal vision statement addresses all aspects of the individual’s life—family, career, social life, and role in her community. This statement also reflects the individual’s core values and how she intends to incorporate them into her life.



For more information on vision statements, and for help creating your own, watch this short YouTube video called “How to Write a Vision Statement”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yBUBmciQBk>.

FUTURE

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Ready, Set, Commit!

You may think that once you have determined your personal vision that you have completed the hard part. The truth is, your work has just begun! A personal vision is a great starting point for a lifetime of personal fulfillment—but having a vision doesn't mean you're automatically on the fast-track to success. Achieving the future that you want will require years of hard work and persistence. To get the most out of the personal vision that you have created, commit yourself to it every day. Write it down and place it somewhere that you will see it often—and then live by it. Use your vision as a guidebook, consulting it whenever you are faced with a crossroads or a new decision. Make a promise to yourself that you will achieve your goals, and then prove it through discipline and determination.

As you learn and grow, you might realize that your personal vision no longer accurately represents what you want in life. That is okay! Just as you will change over time, so will your vision. If at any point you feel as if your vision needs adjustment, don't hesitate to make changes or switch directions entirely. Remember that achieving a personal vision is a never-ending pursuit of your desired future—a challenging but exciting lifelong journey.

Vision is a powerful motivator—one that many influential people have used to overcome obstacles on their journey to success. To hear Will Smith, Sylvester Stallone, Lindsey Sterling, and other stars speak about the importance of having a vision and sticking to it, check out this inspiring YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vx14K-PCZ6U>.

- ▶ *Determining your personal vision is a great way to set yourself up for success.*



Summary

Each person's personal vision is unique and tailored to his/her own strengths, talents, and core values. An individual's personal vision should excite and motivate him/her—it should not attempt to please anybody else. It is important to be realistic when determining a personal vision. Being honest about strengths and weaknesses will prevent disappointment later on. To create a personal vision statement, you should head to a quiet place for at least 30 minutes to reflect on your core values, career and personal goals, and strengths and talents. Create a mental image of the ideal future in a certain number of years, addressing your career, family, social, and community life. Write your personal vision statement using "I" statements and future tense. After creating a personal vision, you must commit to it every day to achieve your desired future.

TOTAL RECALL

1. Why should you create a vision that is meaningful to you, not to your family or friends?
2. Why is it important to be realistic when determining your personal vision?
3. After determining your personal vision, what do you need to do to make it a reality?