



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



REFERENCE
SHEETS

REFERENCE SHEET 7

ANATOMY OF A GOOD COMMITMENT

A good commitment gives the client and the Accountabili-Buddy something meaningful to revisit.

It should be clear enough to evaluate, realistic enough to be credible, and substantial enough to matter.

1. CONNECTED TO A CURRENT GOAL

The commitment should advance something the client currently values.

Example:

Goal: Find a new job.

Commitment: Submit two targeted applications this week.

Poor Commitment:

“Organize my desktop.”

Unless organizing the desktop is genuinely necessary for the job-search goal.

2. SUBSTANTIALLY WITHIN THE CLIENT’S CONTROL

Clients can commit to behavior. They cannot guarantee external outcomes.

Outcome

“Get hired this month.”

Not fully controllable.

Behavioral Commitment

“Submit four qualified applications and contact two former colleagues.”

Substantially controllable.

Outcome goals still matter. They provide direction. Accountability usually attaches more effectively to what the client can actually do.

3. SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR

The commitment should create a shared basis for later evaluation.

Weak:

“Work on the course.”

Stronger:

“Complete Lessons 4 and 5.”

or:

“Spend two 45-minute sessions on the course.”

The appropriate form depends on the task.

4. REALISTIC

The commitment should fit actual circumstances.

Ask:

- Is there enough time?
- Is the necessary resource available?
- Does the client know how to do it?
- Does the commitment fit current competing priorities?
- What does prior performance tell us about whether this is realistic?

Realistic does not mean effortless.

5. MEANINGFUL

A commitment should be large enough to matter.

A commitment can become so easy that it provides little information or progress.

Example:

A client who historically writes for three 45-minute sessions may eventually reduce the goal to:

“Write for five minutes once.”

That may be useful as a temporary recovery strategy. It may be weak as a permanent accountability standard.

6. OWNED BY THE CLIENT

The client should actually endorse the commitment.

Compare:

“Fine. I guess I will do three because you think I should.”

with:

“I do not love it, but yes, I am committing to three.”

Discomfort does not invalidate ownership. External imposition does.

7. REVIEWABLE

At follow-up, both parties should be able to determine what happened.

Ask:

“Will we know whether this occurred?”

If not, the commitment may need clarification.

8. APPROPRIATELY SPECIFIC

Specificity should solve a problem. It should not become unnecessary precision.

Useful:

"Call the dentist tomorrow."

Probably Unnecessary:

"Call the dentist at 10:12 a.m. from the kitchen while standing next to the calendar."

Unless those details solve a known barrier.

TYPES OF COMMITMENTS

Completion-Based

"Submit the application by Friday."

Best when the task has a clear endpoint and completion is reasonably predictable.

Frequency-Based

"Walk three times this week."

Best for repeated behaviors.

Quantity-Based

"Write 1,000 words."

Best when output is more meaningful than time spent.

Time-Based

"Study for two 45-minute sessions."

Useful when task completion is difficult to estimate.

Engagement-Based

"Work on the chapter for three one-hour blocks."

Useful when progress matters but completion cannot reasonably be predicted.

Decision-Based

"Decide by Friday whether to continue the course."

Useful when the unresolved decision itself is preventing progress.

BASELINE VS. STRETCH TARGET

A client may distinguish:

Commitment

What they agree to be accountable for.

Stretch Target

What would represent an especially productive result.

Example:

"Three workouts is the commitment. Five would be excellent."

Do not silently convert the stretch target into the real commitment.

MINIMUM COMMITMENT

Sometimes a minimum commitment is useful.

Example:

"No matter what, one study session happens."

This may protect continuity. It should not automatically become the only standard if the larger goal requires more.

COMMON COMMITMENT PROBLEMS

Too Vague

"Make progress."

Too Large

"Finish the entire business plan this weekend."

Too Small

"Think about the business for five minutes."

Not Controllable

"Get five new clients."

Not Owned

"I will do it because you told me to."

Not Connected to the Goal

Safe activity that does little to advance the objective.

COMMITMENT QUALITY CHECK

Before accepting a meaningful commitment, ask:

Does this advance a current goal?

Is the action substantially within the client's control?

Will we know whether it happened?

Does it fit current capacity?

Is it meaningful enough to matter?

What does prior performance tell us about whether it is realistic?

Is the client actually choosing it?

Is the level of detail useful rather than excessive?

THE CENTRAL PRINCIPLE

A good commitment should be:

clear enough to evaluate, realistic enough to attempt, meaningful enough to matter, and owned enough to provide valid accountability information.