

# Developing SMART Learning Goals

## Introduction

This guide will help you develop and write SMART learning goals. A learning goal describes what you want to learn or achieve. A SMART learning goal is:

**Specific**

**Measurable**

**Attainable**

**Relevant**

**Time-limited**

As a nurse, you need to create learning goals for your Learning Plan, a mandatory requirement of the Quality Assurance Program. You may also need to write learning goals for a workplace performance appraisal.

Writing down your learning goals is an important step toward achieving them. A well-defined learning goal formalizes the details, such as: What is to be accomplished? Who will be involved? When will the learning activity be completed?

Each section of this guide defines a component of a SMART goal and gives you an example. Once you have created your goal, you can use the SMART Learning Goal Form to chart your goal, and the SMART Learning Goal Checklist to help you create learning activities to help you achieve the goal.

# What is a SMART Learning Goal?

## 1. It is **S**pecific.

A SMART goal is detailed, focused and clearly stated. Everyone reading the goal should know exactly what you want to achieve.

**Example:** As a nurse educator, my goal is to increase the amount of feedback I receive from students and new staff regarding the orientation program at my facility.

This statement is clear and has enough detail that anyone would understand what you are trying to achieve.

## 2. It is **M**easurable.

Measurable goals are quantifiable, meaning, the results are observable and measurable. Being “better” is ambiguous—how do you know if you are “better?”

**Example:** Currently, I only receive feedback from about 20 per cent of new staff and students. I want to increase that to 60 per cent in the first year of implementing my goal.

The results of the goal can be measured and observed.

## 3. It is **A**ttainable.

Attainable goals can be achieved based on your skills, resources and area of practice.

**Example:** I can consult with colleagues and access resources from a variety of departments at the facility.

You have the necessary skills and the resources in your practice setting to achieve this goal.

## 4. It is **R**elevant.

Relevant goals are applicable to your current role and clearly linked to your key role responsibilities.

**Example:** It is an expectation of my job to evaluate if the orientation program is meeting the needs of new staff and students.

This goal is applicable to your role and responsibilities as a nurse educator.

## 5. It is **T**ime-limited.

A SMART goal has specific timelines and a deadline. These help you evaluate your progress and motivate you to move toward your goal.

**Example:** By March 2010, I will meet with other staff members to discuss ideas to improve the feedback process. By June 2010, I will create a process for increasing the amount of feedback I receive. And by November 2010, I will measure the improvement in the amount of feedback I receive.

You have set realistic timelines for accomplishing the goal and a deadline for achieving the goal.

# Sample SMART Learning Goal Form

This sample uses the same nurse educator examples from “What is a SMART Learning Goal?” on page 2.

Component of goal	Description of component	My goal
<b>Specific</b>	The goal is focused, clearly stated and there are enough details to provide a clear picture of what is desired.	<i>As a nurse educator, my goal is to increase the amount of feedback I receive from students and new staff regarding the orientation program at my facility.</i>
<b>Measurable</b>	The goal must be quantifiable with results that are measurable.	<i>Currently, I only receive feedback from about 20 per cent of new staff and students. I want to increase that to 60 per cent in the first year of implementing my goal</i>
<b>Attainable</b>	The goal can be achieved based on your skills, resources and area of practice.	<i>I can consult with colleagues and access resources from a variety of departments at the facility</i>
<b>Relevant</b>	The goal is applicable to your current role and clearly linked to your responsibilities in that role	<i>It is an expectation of my job to evaluate if the orientation program is meeting the needs of new staff and students</i>
<b>Time-limited</b>	A timeline and deadline are associated with the goal.	<i>By March 2010, I will meet with other staff members to discuss ideas to improve the feedback process. By June 2010, I will create a process for increasing the amount of feedback I receive. And by November 2010, I will measure the improvement in the amount of feedback I receive.</i>
<b>My completed goal statement:</b>	<i>To implement a process to increase the feedback I receive from new staff and students about the facility's orientation program to 60 per cent by November 2010.</i>	

# SMART Learning Goal Form

Use this form to chart your own learning goal.

Component of goal	Description of component	My goal
<b>Specific</b>	The goal is focused, clearly stated and there are enough details to provide a clear picture of what is desired.	
<b>Measurable</b>	The goal must be quantifiable with results that are measurable.	
<b>Attainable</b>	The goal can be achieved based on your skills, resources and area of practice.	
<b>Relevant</b>	The goal is applicable to your current role and clearly linked to your responsibilities in that role	
<b>Time-limited</b>	A timeline and deadline are associated with the goal.	
<b>My completed goal statement:</b>		

# SMART Learning Goal Checklist

The questions in the checklist will help you plan the activities you need to achieve the goal.

- Why did I choose this goal as a priority?
- What activities do I need to do to achieve this goal?
- Can I achieve these activities in my practice setting?
- What information and knowledge do I need?
- What help, assistance and collaboration do I need?
- What resources can help me?
- Is this the best way to accomplish this goal?
- What obstacles might block the achievement of this goal?
- How much will achieving this goal cost in dollars, resources and time?
- How will I know if I learned from this goal?
- What impact will the achievement of this goal have on my nursing practice and/or my practice environment?

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