



Writing SMART Learning Goals Guide

(Specific • Measurable • Attainable • Relevant/Results-Oriented • Time-Bound)

Please watch [Writing Professional Learning Goals for your Self-Directed Learning Tool](#) on the CDO YouTube channel.

As described in the four steps below, the SMART approach helps you write your professional learning goals clearly and concisely. Try to avoid abbreviations and use plain language whenever possible.

Step 1: Reflect on practice.

Learning goals focus on acquiring new knowledge, skills, or competencies. Performance goals help us achieve specific outcomes or results. There can be situations where performance goals require new knowledge or skills. These reflective questions can help you spot the difference between work tasks/performance goals versus learning goals:

- What specific skills or knowledge do you need to develop further in your current role?
- Do specific performance/work task goals require developing new knowledge or skills? Can you separate learning and performance components? Think about how you measure progress and success regarding learning goals.
- What [dietetic competencies](#) could you benefit from additional training or education?
- What aspects of your work are most challenging, and what knowledge or skills would help you overcome those challenges?
- Reflecting on recent projects or tasks, what areas did you struggle with or feel less confident in?
- Should you learn more about any emerging trends or advancements in your area of dietetic practice?
- What feedback have you received from others (i.e., performance appraisals or interprofessional collaborative work) about areas where you could enhance your knowledge or skills?

These reflective questions help assess your learning needs, identify areas where you can focus your professional development efforts, and specify your learning goal. For example, you want to foster effective communication with students.

Step 2: Specify your learning goal.

Use the SMART acronym's "S", "R", and "T" elements to specify your learning goal: Specific/Strategic, Relevant/Results-oriented, and Time-bound.

Specific & Strategic: Focuses on clear, individualized, specified learning you want to achieve.

Example:

My learning goal is to improve my active listening skills to enhance understanding and foster effective communication.

Relevant/Results Oriented: Produces an "endpoint" change in learning that can be defined and sustainable. What is the expected outcome of the learning? (i.e., Why are you setting this goal now? How will you apply knowledge or skills in your practice?)

Example:

This new learning will enhance my communication to establish a positive and supportive learning environment, enhancing student engagement and building a stronger rapport with my students.

Time-Bound: What are your timelines for achieving your learning goals? (i.e., What's the deadline, and is it realistic?)

Example:

I will achieve this learning by July 31, 2024.

Step 3: Write your Action Plan.

Consider the "M" and "A" elements of the SMART acronym to assist with writing your action plan. Remember to align your action plan to your learning goal (think about the resources you need to achieve your goal(s) and how you will measure the learning).

Measurable: Your learning is observable and specifiable. (How can you measure progress and know if you've successfully met your goal?)

Example:

I will obtain student feedback to gain insights into their perception of my active listening skills by June 30, 2024.

I will utilize student feedback to ensure continuous improvement by July 31, 2024.

I will track my progress by self-reflecting on my active listening skills after each interaction with students, using a scale of 1-5 (1 being ineffective, five being highly effective) to assess my level of active listening engagement.

Attainable: Consider realistic strategies and activities within your goal's context and time frame. (Do you have the resources required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them? Is the amount of effort needed roughly equal to what the goal will achieve?)

Example:

I can accomplish my learning goal by Completing a Communication Skills Workshop, including active listening, by February 28, 2024.

Enroll in a public speaking course to practice active listening skills by March 15, 2024.

Review CDO Resources regarding supervising learners by March 30, 2024.

Step 4: SMART Goal

Review what you've written above in steps 2 and 3 to write your new learning goal and action plan. The learning goal and action plan make up your SMART goal for your SDL Tool submission.

Learning Goal

I will improve my active listening skills to enhance understanding and foster effective communication. This new learning will improve my communication to establish a positive and supportive learning environment, enhancing student engagement and building a stronger rapport with my students by July 31, 2024.

Action Plan

- *Complete a Communication Skills Workshop by February 28, 2024.*
- *Participate in a public speaking course to practice active listening by March 15, 2024.*
- *Review CDO Resources regarding supervising learners by March 30, 2024.*
- *Obtain student feedback to gain insights into their perception of my active listening skills by June 30, 2024.*
- *Utilize student feedback to ensure continuous improvement by July 31, 2024.*
- *Track my progress by self-reflecting on my active listening skills after each interaction with students, using a scale of 1-5 (1 being ineffective, five being highly effective) to assess my level of active listening engagement.*

Need more help?

- Review these examples of SMART Goals for Client Care ([English](#), [French](#)) and Non-Client Care ([English](#), [French](#)) to complete your Self-Directed Learning Tool.
- Review the [SMART Goals Writing Template](#).
- Watch the video "[Writing Professional Learning Goals for your Self-Directed Learning Tool](#)" on the CDO YouTube channel.

Once you've completed your goals, you may wish to cross-check to make sure they are SMART and meet the [SDL Tool Criteria for Review](#).