

Developing

SMART

Learning Goals



COLLEGE OF NURSES
OF ONTARIO
ORDRE DES INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS DE L'ONTARIO

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

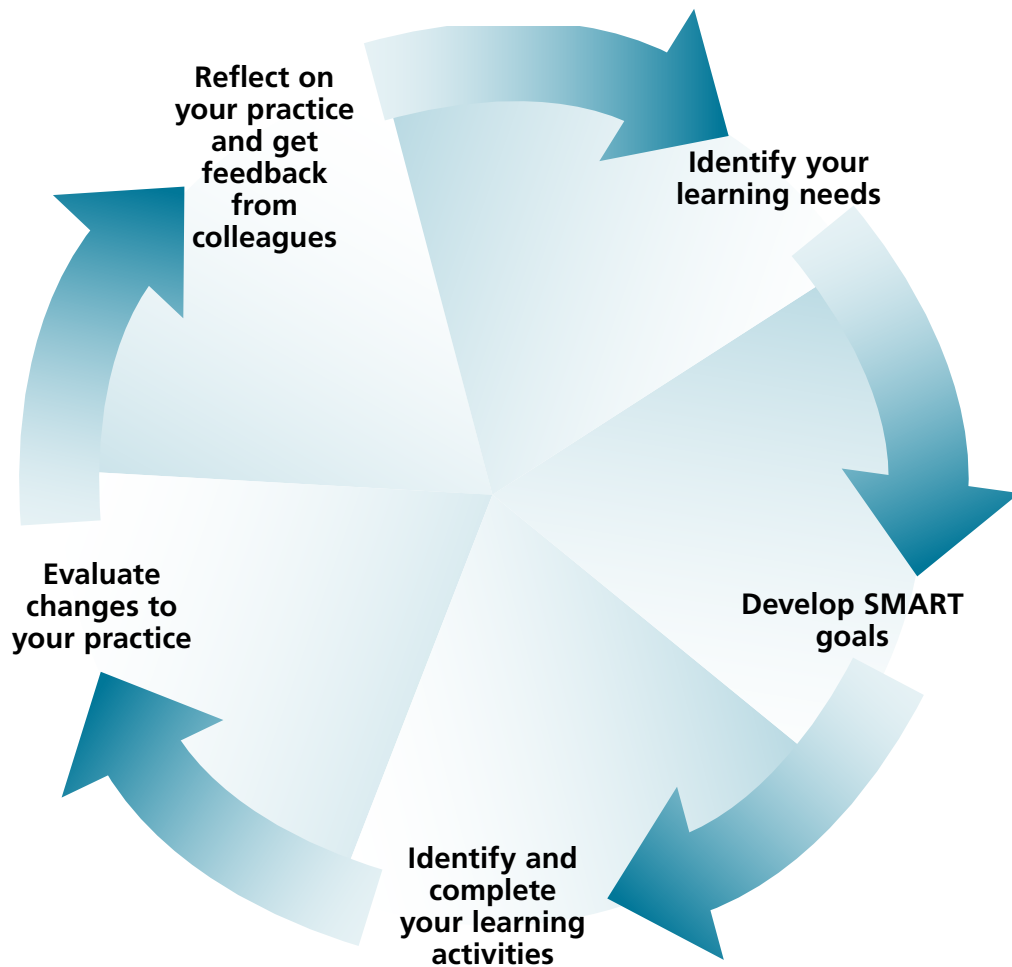
Introduction

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

Specific **M**easurable **A**ttainable **R**elevant **T**ime-limited

Developing a SMART learning goal makes sure that your goal is focused and provides a clear idea of what you want to learn. A SMART goal makes it easier to plan relevant learning activities, measure your progress toward achieving the goal and know when you have met your goal.

This graphic shows you how developing SMART learning goals is part of a continual process, which includes reflecting on your practice and developing a Learning Plan with goals and activities.



How do I start?

You start by reflecting on your practice, and discovering what your strengths and learning needs are. You can also get feedback from colleagues, which will help you identify strengths and learning needs that you missed or didn't think about, adding depth to your own reflection. This reflection helps you to continually improve your competence as a nurse. There are suggestions to help guide your reflection in the Practice Reflection worksheet at www.cno.org/qa-resources.

You will use the learning needs you identified in your reflection to develop learning goals and your Learning Plan.

Your Learning Plan

Research shows that you are more likely to achieve a goal if you write it down. Having a Learning Plan allows you to write down your goals, and track your learning activities and outcomes, all in one place. The online Learning Plan at myQA allows you to develop and update your information easily. You can find it at www.cno.org/qa.

You need to have two learning goals in your Learning Plan. You must select a College practice document to which each goal relates; review your selected practice document to make sure you have chosen the correct one for your goal.

You shouldn't choose a document based only on its title. For example, from the title, you might think the *Working in Different Roles* practice guideline is about changing jobs. In fact, it is really about your accountability when working in a different role, such as an RN employed as an RPN, or an RPN employed as an unregulated care provider.

If you are a Nurse Practitioner, then you must also develop a learning goal based on the *Nurse Practitioner* practice standard. You can find all the practice documents at www.cno.org/pubs.

What is a SMART Learning Goal?

A SMART goal is:

1. Specific.

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

2. Measurable.

A measurable goal is quantifiable, meaning you can see the results.

3. Attainable.

An attainable goal can be achieved based on your skill, resources and area of practice.

4. Relevant.

A relevant goal applies to your current role and is clearly linked to your key role responsibilities.

5. Time-limited.

A time-limited goal has specific timelines and a deadline. This will help motivate you to move toward your goal and to evaluate your progress.

A SMART learning goal is structured so that anyone who reads your goal statement will understand what you want to learn. For your QA Learning Plan you will be developing professional goals, but you can use this format for any type of goal, professional or personal. Here are two examples of personal SMART goals:

"I want to lose 16 lbs and lower my body mass index from 27 to 24 by November 30."

"I want to run the local charity 5k race on August 15."

How do I write a SMART learning goal?

1. Start by identifying what it is you want to learn.
2. Be specific and write it down in one sentence. Try not to use vague phrases such as “I want to learn about...” If you are too vague, then how will you know when you reach your goal? Use an action word to describe what you want to achieve. Using an action word makes sure your goal is measurable. Examples of action words are:
 - identify
 - develop
 - plan
 - design
 - compare
 - describe
 - evaluate
 - explain
 - demonstrate
 - create.
3. Make sure your goal is realistic, given the resources that you have. A goal set too high may set you up for failure, whereas a goal set too low will fail to challenge and motivate you.
4. Make sure your goal is related to your practice.
5. Identify a reasonable time frame to complete your learning activities and achieve your goal.

Make sure that your learning goal is about what you need to learn and is not a learning activity. For example, “I am going to enrol in a course about nursing legislation” is a learning activity, not a learning goal. The goal is to identify and explain the various legislation that governs nursing practice in Ontario. The activity is the course.

Example of a goal that is not SMART:

“I want to learn about depression.”

Example of a SMART goal:

“I want to identify the difference between dementia, delirium and depression, including the most common causes, symptoms and treatments. I will complete this by September 30.”

I have a SMART learning goal, what do I do next?

Now you can develop activities for achieving your goal. Activities must have a deadline to keep your learning on track. Try not to use “ongoing” in place of a deadline, because a SMART goal is time-limited.

You should have at least three different learning activities for each goal. While developing the activities, think about what type of learner you are. Do you learn best by observing? Reading? Discussing? Choose the learning activities that work best for you. Some examples of learning activities include:

- watching a webinar
- reading a journal article
- attending a conference or workshop
- mentoring someone, or being mentored
- completing an online course
- shadowing a colleague

- role playing with a colleague
- reviewing case studies
- going through a practice simulation.

Once you have chosen an activity you can write an activity statement. This must clearly outline your learning strategy. It should be specific and based on what is realistic within your time frame.

Example of an incorrect activity statement:

“I will attend an in-service and read.”

Example of a correct activity statement:

“I will read at least two current nursing journal articles about depression, dementia and delirium by the end of April.”

Next steps

Once you have your activity statements written, you can start completing the activities. Remember, your Learning Plan is a work in progress. Make sure you review it on a regular basis and update it when you complete an activity and when you reach a goal.

Developing SMART Learning Goals Pub. No. 44047

Copyright © College of Nurses of Ontario, 2014.

Commercial or for-profit distribution of this document in part or in whole is prohibited except with the written consent of the College. This document may be reproduced in part or in whole for personal or educational use without permission, provided that:

- due diligence is exercised in ensuring the accuracy of the materials reproduced;
- the College is identified as the source; and
- the reproduction is not represented as an official version of the materials reproduced, nor as having been made in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of, the College.

Additional copies of this booklet may be obtained at www.cno.org/qa, or by contacting the College's Customer Service Centre at 416 928-0900 or toll-free in Ontario at 1 800 387-5526

Based on the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario's *Developing SMART Learning Goals*. Used with permission.



**COLLEGE OF NURSES
OF ONTARIO**
**ORDRE DES INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS DE L'ONTARIO**

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

101 Davenport Rd.
Toronto, ON
M5R 3P1
www.cno.org
Tel.: 416 928-0900
Toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526
Fax: 416 928-6507