



Physiotherapy Alberta  
College + Association

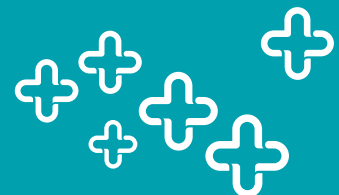
## Learning Goals + SMART Goals

A continuing competence program support tool  
for physiotherapists

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Writing learning goals is an integral part of the reflective practice review component of Physiotherapy Alberta's continuing competence program. This member support tool outlines the importance of setting learning goals and provides practical tips and activities to help physiotherapists develop and enhance their goal writing skills.





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# Learning Goals

## Why set learning goals?¹

Goal setting is a powerful technique used by top-level athletes, business executives and leaders. Goals give you purpose and direction. Goal statements express the desired results of activities. Goal planning helps identify and organize the steps required to achieve your intended results. For physiotherapists goal setting helps:

- clarify priority areas for learning,
- keep learning on track, and
- competence moving forward.

## Setting learning goals

A goal is an end toward which you direct specific effort. A goal must have a measurable outcome so you know that you've reached it.

To set meaningful goals, it is necessary to have an understanding of your abilities relative to the demands of your professional role. Physiotherapy Alberta's reflective practice review self-assessment and patient care reflection tools are intended to help physiotherapists identifying a learning goal. Feedback from patients and peers, performance appraisals and other practice review activities provides equally important information to be considered when setting goals.

In all likelihood, your professional role encompasses many elements (e.g., clinical expertise, communication, collaboration, advocacy, practice management, scholarly activity, and professionalism). The goals you set should address one or more of these practice elements. In addition, the goals you set should not only impact your personal skill set but also patients served and/or your practice environment.

When writing goals it is useful to ask:

- What do I need to know?
- What do I do well?
- What could I do better?
- What is most important?
- What are the needs of my practice?
- Where am I relative to the needs?
- What resources can I use to help me achieve my goal?
- How much time do I have to achieve my goal?



# SMART Goals

## Developing SMART learning goals

SMART is an acronym commonly used to assist with the goal setting process. The SMART format provides clarity about goals, what they mean and how and when you will achieve them.

SMART goals have the following format:

<b>Specific</b>	A specific goal is detailed and focused, contains enough detail to clearly define what you want to achieve. Everyone should know exactly what is to be achieved.
<b>Measurable</b>	A measurable goal is quantifiable and includes concrete criteria for measuring progress. Measuring progress helps you stay on track. Everyone should know when the goal has been achieved.
<b>Action-oriented</b>	An action-oriented goal uses verbs that indicate the course of action to be followed. Everyone knows what steps you will take to accomplish your vision.
<b>Realistic</b>	A realistic goal is practical and achievable within the defined timelines. The goal must express an objective you are willing and able to work towards. A goal should stretch you, but not so far that you will be discouraged before you even start.
<b>Time sensitive + resource constrained</b>	The goal has a definite deadline for completion and realizes the limits of available resources.

The following is an example of a SMART goal:

*By June 30, I will be able to explain to a colleague, physiotherapy assistant or patient the surgical procedures (Hartman, hemi-colectomy, trachea-esophageal fistula), including indications for physiotherapy intervention.*



### SMART Goal Exercises

- Five exercises (page 5-8) are presented to help identify the components of goal statements and determine if they meet the SMART format. Answers follow each example.
- A SMART goal worksheet (page 9) is provided to help with drafting a SMART goal.
- Two examples of SMART goals (page 10-11).
- A list of action verbs to be used in goal statements (page 12).

#### Exercise 1: Is the goal specific?

How specific are the following goals? Indicate if the goals are specific enough to spell out the details of the goal.

Goal statement	Too general	Specific enough
a) To use appropriate resources to increase patient independence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) To take measurements for custom made orthotics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) To learn a few words and phrases in Chinese to be able to communicate better with my clients.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) To learn more about using fitness gym equipment at the local fitness centre for upper and lower extremity sports injuries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) To get updated on the most recent literature in the treatment of musculoskeletal injuries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) To increase knowledge about risks/causes, prevention and treatment related to skin breakdown of patients confined to bed or chairs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) To have a paper accepted for presentation in the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Answers

Too general - a, e, g.

Specific enough - b, c, d, f.



**Exercise 2: Is the goal measurable?**

Measurable goals are quantifiable. They provide a standard. Being ‘better’ is too ambiguous. How do you know when you are ‘better?’ What is enough?

Which of the following are measurable?

Goal statement	Is my goal measurable?	
	Yes	No
a) To complete and record brief comprehensive multi-dimension assessments of the elderly client.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) To prepare and present an overview of sports injuries to a group of fitness club members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) To learn more about current surgery and rehab concepts in the treatment of anterior cruciate ligaments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) To pass the McKenzie credentialing exam.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) To learn how to incorporate biofeedback into my treatments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) To expand my knowledge and understanding of Lou Gehrig’s Disease.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) To complete the Acupuncture Foundation of Canada Institute Level 1 acupuncture exam by June 30 next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Answers**

Measurable - a, b, d, g.

Not measurable - c, e, f.

**Exercise 3: Does the goal use an action verb?**

Verbs tell you what activity is to be carried out. List some action verbs:


See page 12 for a list of action verbs.

#### Exercise 4: Is the goal realistic?

Are the following realistic or unrealistic?

Goal statement	Is my goal realistic?	
	Yes	No
a) To introduce new equipment that will improve client outcomes and satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) To understand the effect of five medications for drugs used in the treatment of osteoporosis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) To become an expert clinician within 12 months.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) To complete the Part B examinations within 12 months.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) To update clinical skills in all areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) To speak Chinese fluently by the end of the four month introductory language course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) To learn two new treatments for stroke.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Answers

Whether a goal is realistic or not will, of course, depend on the people, resources and circumstances involved. But based on certain assumptions and generalities, here are the responses:

- Realistic - a, b, g.
- Unrealistic - c, d, e, f.
- Note - d may be realistic if someone has finished the course work, but not if they are starting the course work.



**Exercise 5: Does the goal have a time line?**

Time-resource-constrained goals establish time lines and resources needed to achieve the goal. Time lines encourage action and deadlines encourage activity. These help you evaluate your progress and motivate you to move along towards your goal.

Which of the following are deadlines and which are appropriate expressions of time?

Time line specified	Does my goal include a deadline?	
	Yes	No
a) On a continuous basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) By the end of the fiscal year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) By December 31 of this year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) By the end of six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) As soon as possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) At the end of my medical rotation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Sometime next week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Answers:**

Yes - b, c, d, f.

No - a, e, g.





## SMART Goal Worksheet

Goal component	Component description	My goal component
<b>S</b> pecific	Enough details is present to provide a clear picture of what is desired.	
<b>M</b> easurable	The goal is measurable so you know when you have achieved it.	
<b>A</b> ction-oriented	The details of what you are to do are clear.	
<b>R</b> ealistic	The goal is applicable to your current work role or another role you are planning on taking on.	
<b>T</b> ime and Resource Constrained	Timeline and costs (if any) are associated with the goal.	
<b>Completed goal statement:</b>		



## Sample SMART Goal Worksheets

### Example 1 - Surgical procedures:

Goal component	Component description	My goal component
<b>S</b> pecific	Enough detail is present to provide a clear picture of what is desired.	<b>Surgical procedures</b> - Hartmann, hemicolectomy, laryngectomy, trachea-esophageal fistula.
<b>M</b> easurable	The goal is measurable so you know when you have achieved it.	Understand and be able to explain procedures to patient and/or assistants/students including indications as a physiotherapy intervention.
<b>A</b> ction-oriented	The details of what you are to do are clear.	Review textbooks, internet, hospital library, discuss with surgical nursing staff and surgical resident.
<b>R</b> ealistic	The goal is applicable to your current work role or another role you are planning on taking on.	Appropriate for surgical unit I am assigned to.
<b>T</b> ime and Resource Constrained	Time line and costs (if any) are associated with the goal.	June 30.
<p><b>Completed goal statement:</b></p> <p>By June 30, I will be able to explain to a colleague, physiotherapy assistant or patient, the surgical procedures (Hartman, hemi-colectomy, trachea-esophageal fistula), including indications for physiotherapy intervention.</p> <p><b>Key competency on Learning Planner + Tracker</b> - Expert 1.5 <i>'develops and recommends an intervention strategy.'</i></p>		



**Example 2 - Informed consent:**

Goal component	Component description	My goal component
<b>S</b> pecific	Enough detail is present to provide a clear picture of what is desired.	I need to improve my documentation around decision making and consent to treatment plan with patients.
<b>M</b> easurable	The goal is measurable so you know when you have achieved it.	By January 30, 90% of my charts contain a note indicating that I have discussed, and the patient has consented, to a plan of care.
<b>A</b> ction-oriented	The details of what you are to do are clear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Establish a baseline of current practice</b> - conduct a chart audit of 25 charts by October 31.</li> <li>• <b>Review the clinic forms and revise to include a section for PTs to initial when consent to the plan of care has been discussed and obtained</b> - ensure I am consistent with discussing the plan of care with all patients.</li> </ul>
<b>R</b> ealistic	The goal is applicable to your current work role or another role you are planning on taking on.	Indicating consent has been obtained is required for work. Documenting consent to the plan of care is part of the College clinical records standard which we should be meeting all the time.
<b>T</b> ime and Resource <b>C</b> onstrained	Timeline and costs (if any) are associated with the goal.	Achieve 90% compliance by September 30 and 100% by the end of the year.
<p><b>Completed goal statement:</b></p> <p>By September 30, 90% of 25 of my randomly selected charts will contain a written entry signifying that treatment consent was discussed and obtained. By December 30, I will achieve 100% compliance.</p> <p><b>Key competency on Learning Planner + Tracker</b> is Collaborator 3.1 because the competency 3.14 'promotes active and informed shared decision making' best describes the topic of this learning goal.</p>		

## Action Verbs

Management skills	Communication skills	Organizational skills	Research skills	Technical skills
administer	address	approve	analyze	adapt
analyze	advertise	arrange	clarify	apply
appoint	arbitrate	catalogue	collect	assemble
approve	arrange	categorize	compare	built
assign	author	chart	conduct	calculate
attain	clarify	classify	critique	compute
authorize	collaborate	code	diagnose	conserve
chair	communicate	collect	evaluate	construct
consider	compose	compile	examine	convert
consolidate	condense	correct	experiment	debug
contract	confer	correspond	explore	design
coordinate	consult	dispatch	extract	determine
decide	convey	distribute	formulate	develop
delegate	convince	execute	gather	devise
develop	correspond	file	indentify	engineer
direct	debate	generate	inspect	fabricate
eliminate	define	implement	interpret	fortify
emphasize	develop	incorporate	interview	install
enforce	direct	inspect	invent	maintain
enhance	discuss	log	investigate	operate
establish	draft	maintain	locate	overhaul
evaluate	enlist	monitor	measure	programme
generate	explain	obtain	organize	rectify
handle	express	operate	research	regulate
head	formulate	order	review	remodel
improve	influence	organize	search	repair
incorporate	interact	prepare	solve	restore
increase	interpret	process	summarize	solve
initiate	interview	provide	survey	specialize
inspect	lecture	purchase	systematize	standardize
institute	mediate	record	test	study
manage	moderate	register		train
merge	motivate	reserve		upgrade
navigate	negotiate	respond		utilize
organize	observe	retrieve		
originate	outline	review		
plan	participate	route		
preside	persuade	schedule		
prioritize	present	screen		
recommend	promote	specify		
reorganize	reconcile	submit		
replace	recruit	supply		
restore	report	standardize		
review	resolve	systematize		
schedule	synthesize	update		
supervise	wrote	validate		



Teaching skills	Financial skills	Creative skills	Helping skills
adapt advise clarify coach communicate conduct coordinate critique develop enable encourage evaluate facilitate focus guide individualize inform initiate instil instruct motivate persuade set goals simulate stimulate taught test train transmit tutor	administer adjust allocate analyze appraise assess audit balance budget calculate compute conserve correct determine develop estimate forecast manage market measure net plan prepare programme project qualify reconcile reduce research retrieve	act adapt combine compose conceptualize condense create design develop direct display entertain establish fashion formulate illustrate initiate institute integrate introduce invent model modify originate perform photograph plan revise revitalize shape solve	adapt advocate aide answer arrange assess assist clarify coach collaborate contribute cooperate counsel demonstrate diagnose educate encourage ensure expedite facilitate familiarize further guide help insure intervene motivate prevent refer rehabilitate represent



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