

# SMART goals: a guide for pharmacy students



As a pharmacy student, you are entering a profession with competing demands, where continuous learning is part of everyday practice. It can be easy to feel pressure or to compare yourself with others. When everything feels urgent, this can quickly become overwhelming. SMART goals offer a structured way to focus your learning. It helps you move from broad intentions to measurable progress.

## The SMART framework

<b>S - Specific</b>	A specific goal clearly defines what you want to learn, improve, or achieve. Rather than saying, 'I want to present better', pinpoint exactly what this means. For example, becoming more comfortable presenting online.
<b>M - Measurable</b>	A measurable goal allows you to track progress. You might set a target number of presentations to complete or aim for a particular feedback score.
<b>A - Achievable</b>	Your goal should be realistic within your current environment. While aiming for the highest mark in an assessed presentation may be your ambition, it's important to focus on what you can control.
<b>R - Relevant</b>	A relevant goal should connect to your broader aims. For example, an advanced voice projection course might help with theatre performance, but developing concise clinical communication skills may be more useful for small-group teaching, OSCEs, or patient counselling.
<b>T - Time-bound</b>	A clear timeframe creates focus and motivation. Deadlines that are distant may reduce commitment, while those that are too soon can lead to unnecessary stress.

## A SMART goal in action

A broad intention such as *"I want to present better"* instead becomes *"By the end of this year, I will improve my confidence in delivering in person presentations by completing at least four patient case presentations and achieving an average participant feedback score of 70% or higher."*

## Avoiding unachievable goals

Unachievable goals can be deceptive. They sound ambitious, but they often set you up for frustration. By focusing on small, realistic, and achievable steps helps ensure that you develop steadily without becoming overwhelmed.

### Using SMART goals helps you to:

- Channel your energy
- Take a sustainable approach to learning
- Practise safely and seek support when needed
- Monitor and reflect on progress
- Develop personal effectiveness habits that will support you.

*This guidance was published June 2026.*

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