



## SMART goals for reflective writing

As you can see from our document on reflective writing, all models end in some form of a call-to-action where you are expected to discuss the specific steps you will take in the future to optimise your performance. To help you with this, you can use the acronym SMART. You can use the template on the second page to guide you.

As an example, I've created a very short reflection on essay feedback using Rolfe et al's (2001) reflective model using the three stages of 'What?', 'So what?', 'Now what?':

---

### What?

I've just received feedback on my last essay and I got a low mark. My tutors commented that my writing is too descriptive and lacks criticality.

### So what?

I've had these comments before but I don't really understand what they mean, and I don't know how to address them. I think I've ignored the comments before because I've passed the assignments, but now my dissertation is coming up and I need to do something.

### Now what?

1. Find out what the terms mean.
2. Learn how to write differently.

---

The above is, technically, a reflection. However, the 'Now what' section does not support me in actually taking action. Without specifics, my good intentions may be lost. This is where SMART goals come in. To give me concrete action points, I could have written something that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound:

### Now what?

My next assignment is due in 6 weeks' time, so I have two goals before then and one goal for two weeks into my writing. The first two will need to be completed within the next two weeks as I want to start writing my assignment 4 weeks before its due date, and I need to know about criticality before I start writing.

1. I will find out what 'criticality' means.  
I will start by looking at the information in the presentation we had on research and writing which is on our Moodle pages. If I need further clarification I will speak with my personal tutor or visit one of the Student Academic Skills (SAS) online pop-ups.
2. I will find out how to apply the definition to my writing.  
For this, I need examples. I will look up the examples on Moodle, on the SAS resources on the University website, and online. If I am still unsure, I will email the SAS and register for one of their online pop-ups.
3. I expect to have the first section of the assignment written 2 weeks before the hand-in date. I will send these to my tutor and ask them to comment on my criticality, and offer suggestions for improvement where necessary.

You can see how the second 'Now what' fulfils all the SMART requirements and creates a specific 'to do' list that will support my writing. It has several suggestions for steps 1 and 2 because not every resource is written in a way I understand, so I like to look at more than one resource to ensure my understanding is correct.

### Finally...

For more information email us at: [academic-skills@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:academic-skills@nottingham.ac.uk) and come to an online study pop-up. Or visit our webpage at [nottingham.ac.uk/go/sas](http://nottingham.ac.uk/go/sas)



## Setting SMART Goals

<b>S</b> Specific	What do I want to accomplish?
<b>M</b> Measurable	How will I know if it has been done?
<b>A</b> Achievable	How can it be achieved? Do I have the skills and resources I need?
<b>R</b> Relevant	What is the purpose or benefit of doing this?
<b>T</b> Time-bound	Within what time frame will I complete it?