

Guide to Writing Effective Learning Objectives

Learning objectives can be thought of as “stepping stones” that help learners understand the cognitive, affective or psychomotor nature of the identified gap(s) and the intended outcome of an educational intervention. Well thought out learning objectives also serve as a guide to course instructors so that they design the format of an activity and create content consistent with closing the identified gap(s). As such, objectives should contain action verbs and criteria that help activity planners evaluate whether the gap(s) was/were closed (e.g., whether the activity helped improve competency, skill, performance, and/or improve patient outcomes).

The content for all educational activities should reflect the premises outlined in the learning objectives and as such should be developed in accordance with the needs identified in the gap analysis. Activity planners should direct instructors to address the need(s) identified and instructors should develop and teach a curriculum designed to close the gap in the provision of optimal care.

Learning Objectives Serve Several Purposes:

- Making the course intentions clear to the prospective learner
- Providing a guide for faculty in developing their presentation
- Assisting attendees in evaluating the effectiveness of the course at the conclusion of the course
- Measuring the results of the educational experience in terms of educational and patient health outcomes.

Outcomes measurements, for the most part, will be measured based on the achievement of the learning objectives in terms of the learner’s competency, skill, performance and/or patient outcomes. Therefore, writing clear and measurable objectives is important.



We help the world breathe
PULMONARY • CRITICAL CARE • SLEEP

Behavioral Verbs for Writing Objectives in the Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor Domains

Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues identified three domains of educational activities:

- **Cognitive:** mental skills (Knowledge)
- **Affective:** growth in feeling or emotional areas (Attitude)
- **Psychomotor:** manual or physical skills (Skills)

Verbs for use in Stating **COGNITIVE** Outcomes:

KNOWLEDGE	COMPREHENSION	APPLICATION	ANALYSIS	SYNTHESIS	EVALUATION
define	discuss	compute	distinguish	diagnose	evaluate
list	describe	demonstrate	analyze	propose	compare
recall	explain	illustrate	differentiate	design	assess
name	identify	operate	compare	manage	justify
recognize	translate	perform	contrast	hypothesize	judge
state	restate	interpret	categorize	summarize	appraise
repeat	express	apply	appraise	plan	rate
record	convert	use	classify	formulate	choose
label	estimate	practice	outline	arrange	decide

Verbs for use in Stating **AFFECTIVE** Outcomes:

RECEIVING	RESPONDING	VALUING	ORGANIZATION	VALUE / COMPLEX
Sit/erect	answer	Join	adhere	act
reply	greet	Share	integrate	practice
accept	read	Complete	organize	discriminate
show	report	Follow		influence

Verbs for use in Stating **PSYCHOMOTOR** Outcomes:

PERCEPTION	SET	GUIDED RESPONSE	MECHANISM	COMPLEX	ADAPTATION	ORIGINATION
identify	react	display	display	display	adapt	create
detect	respond	manipulate	manipulate	manipulate	revise	compose
differentiate	start	work	work	work	change	arrange
		perform	write		operate	

Words That Should not be Used as Cognitive Objectives:

know	really know	understand	appreciate	become
learn	thinks critically	Approach	improve	grow
increase	expand horizons	grasp the significance of		

Reference:

Bloom Benjamin S. and David R. Krathwohl. Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, by a committee of college and university examiners. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain. New York, Longmans, Green, 1956.



We help the world breathe
PULMONARY • CRITICAL CARE • SLEEP