

Guidelines for Writing Learning Objectives

Tips for Writing Learning Objectives

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What Learning Objectives Are

- A learning objective is a statement that describes what the learner is expected to achieve as a result of instruction
- Because learning objectives direct attention to the student and the types of behaviors that students should exhibit, sometimes these statements are called “behavioral objectives”

Learning Goals vs. Learning Objectives

- Learning goals and learning objectives are different
- A learning goal is a statement that describes in broad terms what the learner will gain from instruction, e.g., “Students will gain an appreciation of the role of the family medicine physician in the health care system”
- A learning objective is much more specific and is measurable, e.g., “Students will be able to list three characteristics that make the family medicine physician distinctive from other specialists in the health care system”

Parts of a Good Learning Objective

According to Mager, the ideal learning objective has 3 parts:

- A measurable verb
- An important condition (if any) under which the performance is to occur
- A criterion of acceptable performance

Purposes of Learning Objectives

- Guide the teacher in planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction
- Guide the learner in making informed decisions about learning opportunities and in setting priorities for learning

Levels of Objectives: Bloom’s Taxonomy

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

Knowledge Verbs

Example of a Learning Objective Using a Knowledge Verb: A learner will be able to list the five leading causes of hypertension in adults

- Define

- Memorize
- List
- Recall
- Repeat
- Relate
- Name
- Repeat

Comprehension Verbs

Example of a Learning Objective Using a Comprehension Verb: A learner will be able to describe the pathophysiology of symptoms in acute asthma

- Restate
- Discuss
- Describe
- Identify
- Locate
- Report
- Explain
- Express
- Recognize
- Review

Application Verbs

Example of a Learning Objective Using an Application Verb: A learner will be able to apply the stages of readiness model to smoking cessation counseling of adults in the outpatient setting

- Translate
- Interpret
- Apply
- Practice
- Illustrate
- Operate
- Demonstrate
- Dramatize
- Sketch
- Employ
- Schedule
- Use

Analysis Verbs

Example of a Learning Objective Using an Analysis Verb: A learner will be able to distinguish between the diagnoses of major depressive disorder, dysthymia, and adjustment disorder with depressed mood

- Distinguish
- Differentiate
- Appraise

- Analyze
- Calculate
- Criticize
- Compare
- Contrast
- Examine
- Test
- Relate
- Experiment

Synthesis Verbs

Example of a Learning Objective Using a Synthesis Verb: A learner will be able to construct a root cause analysis to better understand why a patient may be non-adherent to treatment recommendations

- Compose
- Plan
- Propose
- Design
- Assemble
- Create
- Prepare
- Formulate
- Organize
- Manage
- Construct
- Set-up

Evaluation Verbs

Example of a Learning Objective Using an Evaluation Verb: A learner will be able to evaluate a patient's one-year cardiovascular risk for acute myocardial infarction

- Judge
- Appraise
- Evaluate
- Revise
- Score
- Select
- Measure
- Value
- Estimate
- Choose
- Compute
- Assess