

Developing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are clear, concise and specific statements describing knowledge, attitudes or skills that learners are expected to gain as a result of participating in your educational activity. Learning objectives are developed based on identified needs or gaps, linking to broader goals and desired outcomes. They guide the choice of educational strategies (content and methods) and assessments. Keep the following practical tips in mind when developing learning objectives:

Learning objectives are for the **learner**, not the teacher! Finish this sentence:

“Upon completion of this activity, learners will be able to...”

Learning objectives should be **measurable**, linking to specific actions or behaviors.

Use action verbs. Avoid “understand, learn, appreciate, believe, know, improve”. Ask yourself,

*“What should the learner be able to **do** differently if the learner participates in the activity?”*

Bloom’s Taxonomy provides a framework for developing educational objectives, instructional activities and assessments. When possible, **aim for higher-order thinking** (beyond basic recall). For example, you may want your learners to be able to explain concepts (*comprehension*), to use information in new situations (*application*), and to draw connections between ideas (*analysis*).

Sample Action Verbs

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
define	classify	apply	analyze	arrange	assess
identify	compile	calculate	calculate	assemble	compare
label	conclude	demonstrate	categorize	compose	critique
list	discuss	develop	classify	construct	decide
match	describe	interpret	criticize	design	determine
name	explain	locate	compare	develop	establish
recall	express	operate	contrast	diagnose	evaluate
recognize	give examples	perform	determine	manage	judge
record	identify	practice	differentiate	organize	justify
relate	interpret	predict	distinguish	plan	measure
repeat	recognize	present	examine	propose	rate
select	summarize	report	outline	relate	recommend
state	translate	use	test	summarize	select

Resources:

Writing Learning Objectives, Office of Educational Quality Improvement, Harvard Medical School
 Kern DE, Thomas PA, Hughes MT, eds. 2nd ed. *Curriculum development for medical education: A six step approach.*
 Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press 2009
 Boston University School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education
 Johns Hopkins Medicine, Continuing Medical Education