**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*