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Writing Learning Objectives

In order to properly evaluate learning outcomes, learning objectives should be *performance based*. Performance-based objectives clearly state what the learner *should be able to do* upon completion of the educational activity.

Elements of a Learning Objective

- 1) Action verb which describes what the learner will be able to do after the course
- 2) Description of the expected behavior

Example:

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify adverse effects of cardiovascular drug XX
- Recognize how this drug impacts physical therapy interventions

Observable and Measurable Action Verbs

When you start developing your objectives, you will have the tendency to use verbs such as “understand,” “learn,” or “comprehend.” These are **vague verbs** and you should **never** use them in your objectives. Instead, use **action verbs** that are measurable and specific. They will help an objective be stated clearly enough that two different instructors would be able to assess students using the same criteria and get the same results. Refer to **Table 1** below for appropriate action verbs to use when writing your objectives.

Building Learning Objectives

Use the chart on the page 3 to help you write your learning objectives. Use the statements developed under Step 3 of Goal Development. Use the action verbs from Table 1 to assist you.

Describe exactly what learners should be doing to demonstrate goal achievement. Ask yourself: “if someone understood/knew/learned about concept xyz how would they demonstrate that understanding/knowledge/learning?”

You can also ask yourself “how would I construct an assessment item for someone who understood this concept?” This will lead you to choosing an appropriate verb for your learning objective.

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Table 1: Action Verbs

Type	Action Verbs for Online Learning			
KNOWLEDGE	adjust	describe	list	predict
These verbs refer to learning information (facts, definitions, concepts, etc.) and developing thinking and learning abilities.	assess	explain	name	report
	calculate	identify	mark	review
	define	label	plan	state
COMPREHENSION	catalogue	duplicate	index	label
Interprets, translates, summarize or paraphrases information.	categorize	estimate	interpret	match
	describe	gather	itemize	order
	derive	group	join	relate
APPLICATION	apply	compute	interpret	solve
Uses information in a situation different from original learning context.	calculate	differentiate	link	use
	change	examine	practice	
	characterize	illustrate	schedule	
ANALYSIS	analyze	contrast	distinguish	relate
Separates whole into parts until relationships among elements is clear.	appraise	criticize	examine	test
	calculate	debate	experiment	translate
	classify	diagram	interpret	
SYNTHESIS	affirm	compose	generate	plot
Combines elements to form new entity from original ones.	arrange	create	modify	prescribe
	assemble	design	organize	propose
	complete	formulate	plan	rearrange
EVALUATION	appraise	conclude	estimate	justify
Involves acts of decision making, judging or selecting based on criteria and rational.	assess	contrast	evaluate	measure
	choose	criticize	interpret	rank
	compare	discriminate	judge	relate
ACTION	construct	identify	participate	select
These verbs refer to performing an activity and carrying out actions. They clearly describe the action you want your learners to perform.	demonstrate	illustrate	perform	sketch
	develop	locate	practice	solve
	employ	measure	repeat	
ATTITUDE	adopt	cooperate	join offer	praise
This objective refers to the learning of new attitudes or beliefs.	agree	defend	participate	select
	avoid	help		support

Author Worksheet: Learning Objective Development

Presentation Title: _____

Behavior Associated with Goal		Action/Behavior (use an action verb and be specific)
a)		
b)		
c)		
d)		