

# Guide to Writing Learning Objectives

The purpose of this document is to better assist you in writing performance-based learning objectives. Learning objectives must be observable, measurable, and focused on the learner. Learning objectives are important in that they clearly communicate the direction of the curricular content, define faculty and learner responsibilities, and enable the evaluation of the learners and the curriculum. Please follow the provided guidelines in the development of performance-based learning objectives for your presentations.

## Goal of a performance-based Learning Objective:

Describe the behavior in measurable terms that you would expect to observe of the learner upon completion of this learning activity.

## Do's and Don'ts

**Do:** Describe the observable **action** that you would expect to see the learner “doing” upon completion of the learning activity.

**Don't:** Do not describe the **instruction** that you will perform in order to teach the learner.

**Do:** Use **measurable terms** to describe the actions of the learner.

**Don't:** Do not use **non-measurable terms** such as *understand, know, be familiar with, comprehend, learn, or appreciate*.

**Do:** Describe **only one** action in each objective.

**Don't:** Combine **more than one** action using “and.”

**Do:** Write learning objectives that are **supported by the content** of the learning activity.

**Don't:** Do not write a learning objective **based on content that is insufficiently addressed**.

## Tips (verb samples on following page)

Start with a measurable verb followed by a description of the action that the learner will take.

When necessary, for the sake of clarity, a learning objective may also need to specify the conditions in which the action will occur (e.g. specific information to clarify clinical focus and/or patient characteristics). Use either the top four levels of Bloom's Taxonomy or the top three levels of Webb's Depth of knowledge Levels (DOK) to aid in the selection of appropriate verbiage.

Be careful when using verbs such as *describe, explain, review, or summarize*. They imply that the learner will communicate verbally with someone. These verbs should be used in the context of communicating with the patient, and not used to describe something that a faculty member would do (i.e. Explain a concept at a live CME activity).

## Examples

Poor Wording	Why?	Better Wording
Understand how to modulate pain therapy by addressing psychological and personality issues.	The term “understand” is non-measurable; and context regarding the patient's condition is absent.	Modulate pain therapy by addressing psychological and personality issues in patients with chronic pain.
Explain the benefits of various exercise modalities for an elderly person.	The learning objective described the instructional method used by the faculty member - the faculty member did the <i>explaining</i> .	Determine the most appropriate exercise modality for health maintenance in the patient who is elderly.
Become familiar with common eye problems.	The objective is not measurable, does not describe the action that the learner should be able to take, and does not describe the context regarding the patient's condition.	The objective is not measurable, does not describe the action that the learner should be able to take, and does not describe the context regarding the patient's condition.
List types of abnormal pulmonary functions.	The verb “list” is too low of mental function for adult learners, let alone physicians.	Given the calculated results of tests compared with predicted normal values, determine the presence or absence of abnormal pulmonary function and classify it as to type and severity.

# Verb Selection Guide to Writing Performance-Based Learning Objectives

The following is a quick tool to use when writing learning objectives. The higher the level you choose, the more rigorous the demand on the participant, so we encourage a high level objective. In this document, an effort has been made to consolidate Bloom's Taxonomy with Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Taxonomy, to accommodate those who are familiar with either guideline. The associated list of verbs below are a partial list and are meant to provide examples for those unfamiliar with either taxonomy.

Consolidated Bloom's and Webb's Taxonomies					
Bloom's Level 2: Knowledge	Bloom's Level 2: Comprehension	Bloom's Level 3: Application	Bloom's Level 4: Analysis	Bloom's Level 5: Synthesis	Bloom's Level 6: Evaluation
DOK Level 1 Activities (Recall):		DOK Level 2 Activities (Skill/Concept):		DOK Level 3 Activities (Strategic Thinking):	
Example:		Example:		Example:	
Recall elements and details of a diagnosis. Conduct calculations. List typical symptoms. Describe treatment options.		Summarize a patient's history. Identify patterns in behavior. Interpret data. Relate a cause and effect of event. Solve routine multi-step problem.		Assess by exam. Support ideas with examples. Develop a scientific model for a complex situation. Determine patient's motivation for treatment and describe its effect on resulting interpretation of diagnosis.	
Apply new concepts to a current problem/situation. Analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources. Design resource tools to inform patients and solve practical or abstract problems.					
Associated Verbs		Associated Verbs		Associated Verbs	
Arrange Calculate Define Describe Identify Label List Match Measure Memorize Name Quote Recall Recite Recognize Repeat Report Review Restate Tabulate Tell Use		Categorize Cause/Effect Classify Collect Compare Construct Determine Display Distinguish Estimate Graph Identify Patterns Infer Interpret Make Observations Modify Organize Perform Predict Relate Separate Show Summarize		Appraise Assess Cite Evidence Construct Coordinate Care Critique Develop a Diagnosis Diagnose Differentiate Draw Conclusions Explain Concepts Formulate Hypothesize Improve Inspect Investigate Prescribe Revise Solve a Problem Use Concepts to	
Analyze Apply Concepts Connect Choose Confirm Counsel Create Critique Design Determine Establish Evaluate Formulate Integrate Manage Prove Rate Recommend Score Select Synthesize Validate Verify					