Guidelines for Writing Learning Objectives

Measurable Behavioral Learning Objectives

Clear and measurable behavioral learning objectives are the foundation for planning an educational activity. Here are some guidelines to assist with this process. Learning objectives use an active verb to **specify the behavior change you expect to be able to measure as a result of the learning.** A learning objective is *measurable* when the participant can **perform a task** (list) identified in the learning objective.

An example of a clear and *measurable* learning objective is:

The participant will: "List two nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents used in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis".

An example of an *unmeasurable* objective is:

The participant will: "Increase his/her knowledge of anti-inflammatory agents used in the treatment of arthritis."

"Increase knowledge" can not be directly demonstrated, therefore it is not a measurable objective. The words "know" and "understand" are not measurable verbs.

When planning how to achieve the purpose of the class, ask yourself:

1. What do I want the participants to accomplish/learn?

2. How will the participants demonstrate that the desired information has been learned?

3. What verb (see samples listed below) will I use in the objective to indicate what the participant will do to demonstrate information learned?

Use of an Action Verb

The verb should correspond with what opportunities are given for the participants to demonstrate the newly learned information. For example, if your objective contains the verb **discuss**, then there must be opportunities for the participant to discuss (one of your teaching methods must include "discussion"). Following is a list of the six levels of **cognitive learning** with some of their accompanying verbs which are used when writing learning objectives.

KNOWLEDGE	COMPREHENSION	APPLICATION
(to recall facts)	*(to understand)*	*(to apply concepts/demonstrate skills)*
Identify	Describe	Perform
List	Locate	Demonstrate
Define	Discuss	Use
Label	Give examples	Practice
Match	Explain	Construct
Name	Paraphrase	Operate

ANALYSIS	SYNTHESIS	EVALUATION
(use information/make connections)	*(formulation)*	*(judgment)*
Diagram	Formulate	Rate
Examine	Categorize	Evaluate
Analyze	Design, plan	Appraise
Compare/contrast	Organize	Revise
Differentiate	Prepare	Interpret

Use of an Action Verb for Affective/Attitude Categories

Here are **affective or attitude** categories with some verbs and examples:

Receiving Phenomena:

Awareness, willingness to hear, selected attention. Listen to others with respect. Listen for and remember the name of newly introduced people.

Responding to Phenomena:

Active participation on the part of the learners. Attends and reacts to a particular phenomenon. Participates in class discussions. Gives a presentation. Questions new ideals.

Valuing:

The worth or value a person attaches to a particular object, phenomenon, or behavior : Demonstrates belief, is sensitive towards

Organization:

Organizes values into priorities by contrasting different values, resolving conflicts between them, and creating a unique value system. The emphasis is on comparing, relating, and synthesizing values.

Internalizing values (characterization):

Has a value system that controls behavior. The behavior is pervasive, consistent, predictable, and most importantly, characteristic of the learner. Instructional objectives are concerned with the student's general patterns of adjustment (personal, social, emotional). discriminates, displays, influences, listens, modifies, performs, practices, proposes, qualifies, questions, revises, serves, solves, verifies.

Use of an Action Verb for Psychomotor Categories

Here are some **psychomotor** (skill) categories and examples:

Imitation:

Observing and patterning behavior after someone else. Performance may be of low quality. Example: Copying a work of art.

Manipulation:

Being able to perform certain actions by following instructions and practicing. Example: Creating work on one's own, after taking lessons, or reading about it.

Precision:

Refining, becoming more exact. Few errors are apparent. Example: Working and reworking something, so it will be "just right."

Articulation:

Coordinating a series of actions, achieving harmony and internal consistency. Example: Producing a video that involves music, drama, color, sound, etc.

Naturalization:

Having high level performance become natural, without needing to think much about it
Examples: Michael Jordan playing basketball, Nancy Lopez hitting a golf ball, etc.

Courtesy of Maine Nurses Association