



Writing Learning Objectives and Contents

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. There are many methods available for writing learning objectives. The most recognized format contains four elements: Audience, Behavior, Condition, and Degree (referred to as A-B-C-D format).

Elements of a Learning Objective

1. **Condition:** Under what conditions do you want the learner to be able to do it? "At the end of this lesson you should be able to..." The first element of the sentence clearly describes the circumstance under which the task will be performed.
2. **Behavior:** The behavior statement in an objective reveals a vivid description of the anticipated outcome. It should include an action verb (see Table 2) to ensure that the objective is performance based. You should aim to answer the question: What should the learner be able to do?

Example:

This course is developed for licensed clinical Physical Therapists. It will provide an overview of the adverse effects of cardiovascular drug XX and will detail how those adverse effects impact physical therapy interventions.

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Identify adverse effects of cardiovascular drug XX and recognize how they impact 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 3** below for approved action verbs to use when writing your objectives.

Building Learning Objectives

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.

Example:

- a) Learn about child maltreatment.
- b) Know about injuries associated with child abuse.
- c) Understand how patterns of behavior may indicate neglect.

Table 1: Translate Goals to Objectives

	Behavior Associated w/Goal	Action/Behavior (use an action verb and be specific)
a)	Learn about child maltreatment.	Describe four types of child maltreatment.
b)	Know about injuries associated with child abuse.	List the types of injuries that are most commonly associated with child abuse.
c)	Understand how patterns of behavior may indicate neglect.	Identify patterns of behavior and physical signs that may indicate neglect.

Writing Contents

Content: Provide an outline of the content/topic to be presented for each learner objective. *Each objective must have a directly-related content/topic outline that is more than a restatement of the objective.*

Table 2: Contents

	Learning Objectives	Contents
	Describe four types of child maltreatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical abuse• Sexual abuse• Emotional abuse• Neglect
	List the types of injuries that are most commonly associated with child abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skin injuries such as bruise and burns• Fractures• Head and eye injuries• Abdominal injuries
	Identify patterns of behavior and physical signs that may indicate neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low self-esteem;• Behavioral problems;• Learning difficulties;• Abusiveness toward others;• Inability to establish healthy sexual relationships as an adult;• Promiscuity or prostitution;• Increased incidences of running away from home;• increased rates of suicide;

Table 3: List of Approved Verbs

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4 HIGHER LEVEL	Level 5 HIGHER LEVEL
<u>Verbs to use</u>	Define, List, Recall, Repeat, Follow, Imitate, Outline, Share, Notice	Distinguish, Explain, Discuss, Restate, Describe, Identify, Recognize, Comply, Participate, Reproduce	Apply, Interpret, Demonstrate, Relate, Operate, Develop, Act, Convince, Express, Help, Execute	Analyze, Distinguish, Infer, Deduce, Compare, Decide, Theorize, Articulate, Coordinate, Integrate	Evaluate, Defend, Criticize, Plan, Propose, Design, Judge, Choose, Revise, Formulate, Justify, Internalize, Resolve, Perfect, Automate, Excel
Description	Recall the information. Repeat what has been said/done. May continue to require assistance.	Understanding of the information to draw conclusions or inferences from information. Reproduces an action demonstrated in the activity from memory or instructions.	Involves more flexibility of thinking. Information is used applied to actual situations or to make a choice from alternatives. The participant can indicate how the information would be applicable to his/her life, work, practice, etc. Individual will demonstrate/defend a preference or display a high degree of certainty and conviction in choice. Participant is able to execute a task or activity without assistance or instruction and with control and minimal error.	Demonstrate relationships and connectedness in the information amongst many parts. Participant expected to solve unfamiliar problems in a unique way, or combine parts to form a unique or novel solution. The participant will formulate a reason why he/she values certain choices, things, or actions and not others; make the appropriate choice based on that valuation. Participant is able to demonstrate the coordination of multi-step action using the proper sequence and control.	Information is used to identify and evaluate conclusions, implications, and consequences. State the basis for and defend judgments. Engage in more abstract reasoning, planning, analysis, judgment, and creative thought. The participant's behavior is consistent with an obvious, internalized value system. The participant performs a given activity with a high level of proficiency in a routine, automatic, and spontaneous way that does not require thought.

When the Activity is finished...	<p>Can the participant recall or remember the information?</p> <p>Can the student replicate the actions demonstrated by the instructor with help?</p>	<p>Can the student explain ideas or concepts? Can the participant reproduce an action from memory or instructions?</p>	<p>Can the student use the information appropriately? Can the student demonstrate an activity to other learners without assistance or instruction?</p> <p>Can the student verbalize how the information learned will be applied to a personal case study/situation?</p>	<p>Can the student examine the information or concept as a whole and scrutinize the elements? Can the participant examine and relate the information to currently held beliefs? Can the student adapt the task or skill learned to a novel situation or challenge (example requiring performing a mobilization with the patient in a different position; using the Model Practice Act crosswalk designed for statute and applying it to regulations)?</p>	<p>Can the student justify a stand or a decision or use the information to create a new point of view on a topic?</p> <p>Can the participant independently perform the task or activity with high skill in no more than twice the time that it takes the instructor or an expert to perform?</p> <p>Have participants engaged in any problem-based or project-based collaborative assignments?</p> <p>Have participants been required to share with others the information they have learned?</p>
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