

How to Write an Effective Learning Objective

OBJECTIVE = (When) + (Who) + WILL BE ABLE TO + MEASURABLE VERB + (Task) + (Criteria)

Learning Objective	Examples
When	"As a result of participating in X"
Who	For LOCUS Learning Objectives, this will mostly be "I"
Measurable Verb	A comprehensive list is below. Choose the verb that is most applicable or use a verb not listed.
Task	What comes after the verb? What are you hoping you will be able to recall, learn, understand, apply, etc.?

One tip to help guide you toward identifying verbs that are measurable is to use Bloom's Taxonomy. Ordered from more basic to more advanced, Bloom's taxonomy provides a broad array of verbs that can be used when writing objectives to help define how you will

(1) know - what content knowledge do you need to have for this experience?

(2) be - what do you hope to become from this experience?

(3) do - how will you practice and refine your skills learned from this experience?

Measurable Verbs

Remembering

define, count, describe, draw, find, identify, label, list, match, name, quote, recall, recite, sequence, tell, write

Understanding

conclude, demonstrate, discuss, explain, generalize, identify, illustrate, interpret, paraphrase, predict, report, restate, review, summarize, tell

Applying

apply, change, choose, compute, dramatize, interview, prepare, produce, role-play, select, show, transfer, use

Analyzing

analyze, characterize, classify, compare, contract, debate, deduce, diagram, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, outline, relate, research, separate

Evaluating

appraise, argue, assess, choose, conclude, critique, decide, evaluate, judge, justify, predict, prioritize, prove, rank, rate, select

Creating

compose, construct, create, design, develop, integrate, invent, make, organize, perform, plan, produce, propose, rewrite

Adapted from Bresciani, M. J., Zelna, C. L., Anderson, J. A. (2004). Assessing student learning and development: A handbook for practitioners. Washington, DC: NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

Criteria for Measurement (evidence)

While this may not be part of your actual learning outcome, it is important to know how you will know you have succeeded. What will you point to that will allow you to say "I accomplished my objective and here's the proof!"

Domains and Dimensions of Learning

Your learning objectives might focus on different domains of learning such as:

- Knowledge (facts, concepts, terminology, new information)
- Skills (things you want to learn to do)
- Attitude or Values (things that you believe are important and want to improve in yourself)

Your learning objectives can also guide your development in different dimensions such as:

- Personal development (strengths, habits, learning and work styles)
- Professional development (how you will grow as a professional, or learn about a profession)
- Civic/justice-orientation (connecting to the public purposes or social issues in the field)

Challenge yourself to write learning goals in more than one domain.

Examples of Learning Objectives

Using three examples, the following chart shows how to take a poorly written learning objective and turn it into a strong learning objective. Notice how the strong learning objectives make clear connections between the internship job tasks and what the student hopes to learn from the experience. Remember, be specific!

Weak	Good	Strong
Make a website.	I will be able to produce an educational website.	As a result of my research into sustainable daily living, I will be able to produce a website that can teach elementary and middle school students what they can do to promote sustainability in their homes.
I would like to be more professional.	I will develop my professionalism by interacting with clients.	As a result of interning at ABC7 Chicago, I will be able to develop my interpersonal skills by greeting guests and answering phone tips.
I want to learn something completely new to me.	I will become familiar with immigration issues.	As a result of interning at XYZ Law Group, I will be able to explain the immigration and legal system.