

Writing Objectives

Requirement:

Each resident will write clear, measurable objectives and submit them 2 weeks prior to their presentation.

Definitions

Goal:

“A goal is a brief, clear statement of an outcome to be reached within a timeframe such as 3-5 years. A goal is a broad, general, tangible, and descriptive statement. It does not say how to do something, but rather what the results will look like. It is measurable both in terms of quality and quantity. It is time based. It is achievable. It is a stretch from where we are now. Above all, it is singular.

Goals can be described or defined as “Outcome statements that define what an organization is trying to accomplish both programmatically and organizationally.”

Objective:

“An objective is a specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-bound condition that must be attained in order to accomplish a particular goal. Objectives define the actions must be taken within a year to reach the strategic goals.”

For lectures, we do not write a goal, instead objectives. The goals are addressed by the overall curriculum for conferences. The individual lecture instead focuses on learning objectives.

Pointers for Writing Objectives

Writing objectives is a key component to a great presentation, but often ignored or rushed at the end. The objectives provide a framework for the presenter, identifying what the focus will be. They identify what behavior the learner will have following the lecture, so they are always started by an action verb. Objectives are not a list of what you will teach/present, but instead what you want your learner to be able to do following the lecture. Remember, most people will not be able to gain more than 1-3 things from any talk. With this in mind, you should never have more than 3-4 objectives (and some would argue only 1-3).

One last key component of writing a good objective is making it achievable from your lecture. An example of an objective on a potential talk would be “The learner will be able to list the causes of hypercalcemia.” The action verb that the learner will be able to do is “list”. This is measurable, and is learner centered. The issue is that it will take much more than simply posting a single slide with the causes of hypercalcemia to achieve this goal. Our job, after writing a good objective (which this maybe a good one, depending upon the talk) is to actually achieve it. This would mean multiple different methods would be needed to have the learner truly list the causes of hypercalcemia.

The following are excerpts from Park University's Website (<http://www.park.edu/cetl2/quicktips/writinglearningobj.htm>):

Tips for Improving Learning Objectives:

1. Learning objectives have two parts: an action verb and a content area. Utilize the action verb to specify the desired student performance followed by a specific description of the course-specific content target.
2. Keep statements short and focused on a single outcome. This allows instructors to determine whether or not an objective has been met without having to distinguish between partial completion or success.
3. To ensure that learning objectives are effective and measurable, avoid using verbs that are vague or cannot be objectively assessed. Use active verbs that describe what a student will be able to do once learning has occurred.
4. Learning objectives should be student-focused and target the expected student outcome. To assist in maintaining a student-centered emphasis, start learning objectives with the phrase "The learner/student will be able to. . ."
5. Learning objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, acceptable to the instructor, realistic to achieve, and time-bound with a deadline).
6. Include complex or higher-order learning objectives when they are appropriate. Most instructors expect students to go beyond memorization of facts and terminology; learning objectives should reflect instructors' expectations for student performance.

Using the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to Write Learning Objectives:

Depending on the course goals, learning objectives may target a range of skills or cognitive processes. Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives differentiates between three domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Domain	Target	Focus
Cognitive	Knowledge, intellectual skills	Mind
Affective	Attitudes, interests, feelings, values, adjustments	Spirit
Psychomotor	Motor and manipulations skills	Body

Most courses in higher education focus on the cognitive domain, thus it is important to examine various levels of cognitive understanding. The cognitive domain is broken-down into six categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis,

and evaluation. Generally, instructors will want to design learning objectives to target a range of levels of student understanding. The phrasing of learning objectives will help guide both instructional activities and assessment, thus instructors should carefully select the emphasis of learning and the relevant verb.

Domain	Emphasis	Relevant Verbs
Cognitive	Knowledge	Recall, identify, recognize, acquire, distinguish, state, define, name, list, label, reproduce, order
Cognitive	Comprehension	Translate, extrapolate, convert, interpret, abstract, transform, select, indicate, illustrate, represent, formulate, explain, classify, comprehend
Cognitive	Application	Apply, sequence, carry out, solve, prepare, operate, generalize, plan, repair, explain, predict, demonstrate, instruct, compute, use, perform, implement, employ, solve
Cognitive	Analysis	Analyze, estimate, compare, observe, detect, classify, discover, discriminate, explore, distinguish, catalog, investigate, breakdown, order, determine, differentiate, dissect, contrast, examine, interpret
Cognitive	Synthesis	Write, plan, integrate, formulate, propose, specify, produce, organize, theorize, design, build, systematize, combine, summarize, restate, argue, discuss, derive, relate, generalize, conclude, produce
Cognitive	Evaluation	Evaluate, verify, assess, test, judge, rank, measure, appraise, select, check, judge, justify, evaluate, determine, support, defend, criticize, weigh, assess
Affective		Agree, avoid, support, participate, cooperate, praise, help, offer, join
Psychomotor		Adjust, repair, taste, bend, measure, perform, operate, use, move

Avoid using verbs that are difficult to measure objectively.

The following verbs are difficult to assess, thus should be used with caution:

- know
- comprehend
- understand

- appreciate
- familiarize
- study
- be aware
- become acquainted with
- gain knowledge of
- cover
- learn
- realize

If you utilize verbs like "know" or "understand", make sure that you state how "knowledge" or "understanding" will be demonstrated. Remember, a good learning objectives is one that can be assessed to determine students' mastery of course material.