Guidelines for Writing Learning Objectives†

The purpose of this guide is to better assist you in writing learning objectives for your sessions. In order to maintain AAMC accreditation, learning objectives must be measurable and focused on the learner. Well-written learning objectives clearly communicate the direction of the curricular content, define faculty and learner responsibilities, and enable the evaluation of the learners and the curriculum.

Please use the following guidelines in the development of your curricular learning objectives.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE CRITERIA**

1. A learning objective is a statement in specific and measurable terms that describes what the learner will know, or be able to do, as a result of engaging in a learning activity.
2. The learning objective contributes to reaching a course/block goal.

**DO’S & 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, the faculty member, will perform in order to teach the learner.

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

**Don’t:** Do not use unmeasurable terms such as understand, know, be familiar with, comprehend, learn, or appreciate.

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

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

**TIPS**

*(action verb samples on following page)*

1. Start with a measurable verb followed by a description of the action that the learner will take.
2. Select the Level & Cognitive Domain to aid in the selection of appropriate verbiage.
3. 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).

**EXAMPLES**

**Poor Wording**
Understand how to modulate pain therapy by addressing psychological and personality issues.

**Why?**
The term “understand” is not measurable; and context regarding the patient’s condition is absent.

**Better Wording**
Modulate pain therapy by addressing psychological and personality issues in patients with chronic pain.

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**Poor Wording**
Become familiar with common eye problems.

**Why?**
The objective is unmeasurable, does not describe the action that the learner should be able to take, and does not describe the context regarding the patient’s condition.

**Better Wording**
Screen for eye conditions commonly associated with type 2 diabetes.

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**Poor Wording**
Formulate a diagnosis and management plan for each of the above.

**Why?**
Assume this learning objective is the third of fourth one. It refers to previously stated objectives and combines two separate actions: diagnosis and management. Each objective must stand alone without reference to other objectives.

**Better Wording**
1. Formulate a sequential diagnosis procedure for the patients with medical complications of pregnancy.
2. Develop a management plan for commonly diagnosed medical complications of pregnancy.

### Verb Selection Guide to Writing Learning Objectives

**Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy**  
*revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level &amp; Cognitive Domain</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Action Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Remembering</td>
<td>Recognizing or recalling knowledge from memory. Remembering is when memory is used to produce definitions, facts, or lists, or recite or retrieve material.</td>
<td>Define, Describe, Identify, Label, List, Match</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Understanding</td>
<td>Constructing meaning from different types of functions be they written or graphic messages activities like interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.</td>
<td>Estimate, Explain, Extend, Generalize, Rewrite, Summarize</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Applying</td>
<td>Carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing. Applying related and refers to situations where learned material is used through products like models, presentations, interviews or simulations.</td>
<td>Apply, Change, Compute, Calculate, Demonstrate, Discover, Manipulate</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Analyzing</td>
<td>Breaking material or concepts into parts, determining how the parts relate or interrelate to one another, or to an overall structure or purpose. When one is analyzing he/she can illustrate this mental function by creating spreadsheets, surveys, charts, or diagrams, or graphic representations.</td>
<td>Analyze, Diagram, Classify, Contrast, Categorize, Differentiate</td>
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<td>5 Evaluating</td>
<td>Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing. Critiques, recommendations, and reports are some of the products that can be created to demonstrate the processes of evaluation.</td>
<td>Appraise, Argue, Compare, Conclude, Contrast, Criticize</td>
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<td>6 Creating</td>
<td>Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing. Creating requires users to put parts together in a new way or synthesize parts into something new and different a new form or product.</td>
<td>Compose, Design, Plan, Assemble, Prepare</td>
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