

# WRITING EFFECTIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

■ Writing concise, accurate, and consistent learning objectives is essential at all levels of learning instruction. Not only can learning objectives ensure that students understand what's expected of them, but instructors can keep their course outcomes consistent across assessments, courses, and departments.

Here, we've compiled the four essential elements required to construct useful and accurate learning outcomes:

## 1. BREAK DOWN LEARNING OBJECTIVES INTO THREE PARTS

The best learning objectives should have three parts. They are as follows:

- **The skill demonstrated.** What should the student be able to do?
- **The level of mastery.** How competently should the student be able to perform the task?
- **The task required.** Under what conditions does the student need to demonstrate his or her ability?

Once you have broken down your objective, you are better able to choose the skills, levels, and tasks you want to measure.

## 2. DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF THE SKILL OR ABILITY YOU AIM TO MEASURE

Consider how much students already know in a field or skill area. Only then can you choose the appropriate level of competency you want them to know.

Take this simple rule of thumb from Bloom's Taxonomy:

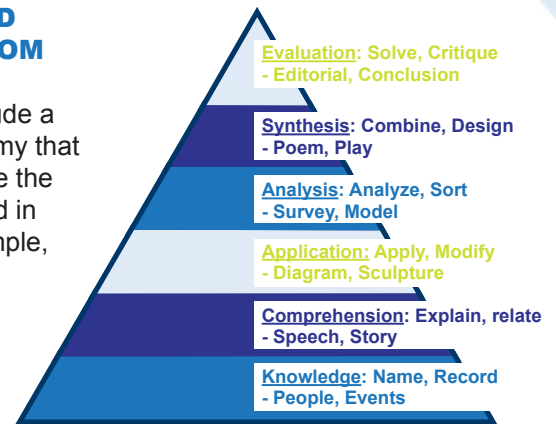
- Students must **remember** a concept before they can **understand** it.
- They must **understand** the concept before they can **apply** it.
- Students must **analyze** a process before **evaluating** it.
- To draw **conclusions**, students must first **evaluate** the process.

## 3. INCLUDE ONE – AND ONLY ONE – VERB FROM BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Each objective should include a verb from Bloom's Taxonomy that helps students demonstrate the level of mastery determined in step number two. For example, if you want a student to understand a concept, you might ask him to "Summarize" or "Describe." Further, choose only a single verb to measure

your objective. Otherwise, how will you judge a student's ability to both "Classify" and "Predict" with a single measurement?

If you want students to do two things or demonstrate two skills, then you should write two unique objectives.



## 4. CREATE SMART LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Once you have written your learning objectives, make sure they're measuring what you intend them to measure with the SMART guidelines. SMART stands for:

- **Specific** – objectives are particular and detailed.
- **Measurable** – the instructor has a method by which to gauge the student's mastery of the objective.
- **Appropriate** – objectives should fit the learner's level.
- **Realistic** – students should be able to complete the objective.
- **Tailored** – the objective should be significant to the class and to the student.

Precise, focused learning objectives help both students and teachers. For students, learning objectives determine what they need to know and how they are intended to demonstrate their knowledge. For you, learning objectives keep you focused on your intended course outcomes.