

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## INTRODUCTION

Learning objectives serve important functions for both you and your students.

- For you, they provide guidance on the selection and development of learning activities and assessments.
- For your students, they focus expectations in terms of content and the level of activity required.

Learning objectives state what the student will be able to *do* or *know* at the end of a course (course objectives) or at the end of a unit (unit objectives).

## A CLOSER LOOK

### How to Write Learning Objectives

It is essential that a learning objective states a student behavior that is **specific**, **observable**, and **measurable**. The objective must be able to be assessed.

To write an objective that is specific and measurable (i.e., an objective that can be assessed), use a strong action verb. Avoid verbs like the following: *learn, know, understand, or appreciate*. Consider the following two objectives:

- **Understand** the views of Piaget and Vygotsky on issues of cognitive development. This objective is **not** measurable. How would this objective be assessed?
- **Compare and contrast** the views of Piaget and Vygotsky on issues of cognitive development. This objective **is** measurable. It can be assessed.

Choose verbs that use/reflect Bloom's taxonomy. Bloom's revised taxonomy identifies six increasingly more complex cognitive levels of learning:

Level 1	Remembering	Recalling and recognizing previously learned information or facts.
Level 2	Comprehending	Being able to articulate what information or facts mean.
Level 3	Applying	Applying learning information, procedures, or concepts to actual situations.
Level 4	Analyzing	Breaking information into parts to identify or articulate relationships between the parts.
Level 5	Evaluating	Justifying a decision, course of action, or merits of particular ideas or information.
Level 6	Creating	Generating new ideas, products, or perspectives.

### Course Objectives

*General and broad for the entire course*

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

### Unit 1 Objectives

*Unit-specific; relate to larger course objectives*

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

### Unit 2 Objectives

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

### Unit 3 Objectives

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

## Examples

Here are sample learning objectives from existing courses. Note how these reflect Bloom's taxonomy and the verbs associated with it.

Level 1	Remembering	Identify the different types of bacterial cell walls (gram-positive, gram-negative, S-layers, etc.), and list their properties.
Level 2	Comprehending	Describe the goals, strengths, and weaknesses of psychological and neurobiological approaches to assessment.
Level 3	Applying	Solve a quadratic equation with complex roots.
Level 4	Analyzing	Compare and contrast both sacred and secular listening selections from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.
Level 5	Evaluating	Evaluate theories of human social, emotional, and moral development by providing examples and contexts to support your position.
Level 6	Creating	Create a plan for classroom approaches to mitigate mild, moderate, and severe misbehaviors.

## Alignment with Learning Activities/Assessments

Course and unit objectives should clearly *align* with (1) the learning activities (these activities enable the student to achieve the objectives) and (2) the course assessments (these assessments measure the student's performance).

It is best if learning activities/assessments and corresponding objectives are at the same level in Bloom's taxonomy. In other words, avoid having a Level 2 objective (e.g., *describe*) assessed with a Level 4 task (e.g., a request to *compare and contrast*).

## Strategy/Approach

The process for writing learning objectives varies depending on whether the course is new or already exists.

- **Creating a new course:** Before doing anything else, concentrate on creating objectives. They should guide the development of the rest of the course.
- **Revising an existing course:** Analyze the learning activities and assessments that are already in the course, then write objectives based on that analysis.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Using Bloom's Taxonomy](#) - More information on each of the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy (University of Arkansas)
- [Bloom's Taxonomy Verb Chart](#) - A list of action verbs associated with each level (University of Arkansas)



### When creating learning objectives, keep in mind:

- Every objective should have a corresponding learning activity/assessment.
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