

Identifying Desired Measurable Learning Objectives

When you write learning objectives you are describing the specific knowledge, skills, or attitudes that students should have when they complete your course. Objectives should be measurable so you can produce evidence that the graduates of your program are meeting the intended outcomes.

There are three different types of learning objectives – knowledge, skills, and attitudes – and the statements written for each directly relate to the outcomes you have set. When writing knowledge objectives, you are trying to define the main concepts (e.g., theoretical principles) that students know when they graduate. When writing skill objectives, you are trying to describe the larger skills (e.g., problem solving). Finally, attitudinal objectives usually describe beliefs about the nature of the field or perceptions about interdisciplinary connections (e.g., ethics). Sometimes the difficult part is to distinguish between the three types because students often have to know a concept before they are able to perform the associated skills. Below are a few examples of objective statements contained on syllabi from a variety of disciplines. Each of the objectives more specifically defines the italicized portion of the outcome examples above.

Communications Goal: Graduates will demonstrate an *understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society and their relationship to the field of communications*.

Learning Objective 1: Students will be able to **analyze** a film for its inclusion or exclusion of certain diverse groups.

Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to **write** an unbiased news article about a two-sided issue.

Comparative Literature: Graduates will *obtain a global awareness through a wide range of international literary and language experiences* that are critical in today's world.

Learning Objective 1: Students will be able to **analyze** a text set outside of the United States and **infer** the social and economic conditions based on the author's description.

Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to **compare** a non-U.S. publication with a U.S. publication and show the similarities and differences between the two settings.

Biology: Graduates will have the *ability to design and conduct experiments as well as analyze and interpret data*.

Learning Objective 1: Students will be able to **choose** the appropriate method or procedure.

Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to **create** a hypothesis and **determine** the methods necessary to test their hypothesis.

Physical Therapy Assistant: Graduates will be prepared to *understand and implement the interventions* that are described by a physical therapist.

Learning Objective 1: Students will be able to **distinguish** between different types of aerobic conditioning exercises.

Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to correctly **measure** standard vital signs.

Physics: Graduates will acquire the *theoretical and experimental background* for work in areas such as acoustics, astrophysics, biophysics, chemical physics, computer science, mathematical physics, and engineering.

Learning Objective 1: Students will be able to **evaluate** an article from a discipline-specific text and write a critique using theoretical principles.

Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to **employ** the correct procedure for a given experiment.

Psychology: Graduates will *understand and generate applications of psychology to individual, social, and organizational issues*.

Learning Objective 1: Students will be able to **distinguish** between several different psychological issues.

Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to **recommend** a course of treatment for an individual based on the issues presented.

When writing learning objectives, it is important to note that each statement should contain a verb (in bold above) that describes what the student will be doing. Using a verb to describe the student actions makes the statement measurable and helps you later define the type of assessments needed to show that the objectives were achieved.