

WRITING BEHAVIORAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES¹

Learning objectives, or learning outcomes, are statements that clearly describe what the learner will know or be able to do as a result of having attended an educational program or activity.

Learning objectives must be observable and measurable.

Learning objectives should (1) focus on the learner, and (2) contain action verbs that describe measurable behaviors.

Verbs to consider when writing learning objectives:

1. list, describe, recite, write
2. compute, discuss, explain, predict
3. apply, demonstrate, prepare, use
4. analyze, design, select, utilize
5. compile, create, plan, revise
6. assess, compare, rate, critique

Verbs to avoid when writing learning objectives:

1. know, understand
2. learn, appreciate
3. become aware of, become familiar with

Here is an example of a well-written statement of learning objectives:

This workshop is designed to help you:

1. Summarize basic hypnosis theory and technique;
2. Observe demonstrations of hypnotic technique and phenomena;
3. Recognize differences between acute and chronic pain;
4. Utilize hypnosis in controlling acute pain;
5. Apply post-hypnotic suggestions to chronic pain; and
6. Practice hypnotic technique in dyads.

Objective learning assessments should be written in a manner that determines whether participants learned what you planned to teach them. The evaluation (or learning assessment) should be based on the stated learning objectives of the program.

¹ Linder-Crow, J. (2000, December). Writing behavioral learning objectives and assessments. Retrieved August 25, 2009 from American Psychological Association, Website: http://www.apa.org/ce/guide_objectives.pdf.