

Writing Educational Objectives

What are objectives?

Educational objectives are specific statements that detail what a participant can expect to learn from an educational activity. For most CME activities, these statements describe knowledge, skill, and attitude changes that should occur upon successful completion of activity.

How many objectives do I need?

The number of objectives for the program should be sufficient to accomplish the intended purpose of the activity. Aim for 2-3 objectives per hour of content. If you have only 1 objective for a long time frame or more than 4 per hour, review your objectives and content. Are you trying to do too much? Are you trying to do too little? Do you need to be more specific? Or less specific?

Focus on the Audience

Objectives should fit the content and the audience. For example, a review lecture on the basic anatomy of a heart may not be appropriate for cardiac surgeons. Focus on more in-depth information or only pertinent information regarding the anatomy that is required to move forward.

What makes an objective?

A good objective is specific, measurable, and answers the following: WHO is going to do WHAT by WHEN?

The WHAT portion should begin with a measurable verb. This means it must be able to be completed and be verified. (See the chart below for strong, measurable verbs.)

Example:

At the conclusion of this activity (WHEN), the participant (WHO) will be able to list 3 of 10 common diagnosis of children at Cincinnati Children's (WHAT).

To be even more specific, add HOW.

Examples:

At the conclusion of this activity (WHEN), the participant (WHO) will be able to list 3 of 10 common diagnosis of children at Cincinnati Children's (WHAT) from memory (HOW).

At the conclusion of this activity (WHEN), the participant (WHO) will be able to program an Alaris pump (WHAT) through the assistance of the user guide provided (HOW).

Suggested verbs

Decide what you want your learner to accomplish and which category it falls under – Knowledge, Skill, or Attitude, and look at the appropriate chart. Click for [Knowledge](#), [Skill](#) or [Attitude](#) verbs.

(continued on next page)

Knowledge Verb Chart

Knowledge is the most widely used category. As the chart moves left to right, the level of knowledge needed to perform a task increases.

← Critical Thinking →

					Evaluation
				Synthesis	Argue
			Analysis	Alter	Assess
		Application	Analyze	Assemble	Compare
	Comprehension	Apply	Break down	Combine	Consider
Knowledge	Arrange	Calculate	Classify	Construct	Contrast
Acquire	Categorize	Change	Conclude	Create	Critique
Attend	Chart	Complete	Criticize	Design	Decide
Choose	Cite	Conduct	Debate	Devise	Determine
Collect	Compile	Demonstrate	Deduce	Expand	Discriminate
Define	Defend	Develop	Diagram	Formulate	Estimate
Detect	Describe	Discover	Differentiate	Generate	Evaluate
Duplicate	Discuss	Employ	Distinguish	Integrate	Interpret
Find	Document	Manipulate	Examine	Manage	Judge
Identify	Explain	Operate	Induce	Modify	Justify
Imitate	Express	Organize	Infer	Originate	Measure
Indicate	Extrapolate	Plan	Inspect	Rearrange	Rank
Label	Fill in	Practice	Inventory	Reconstruct	Rate
List	Follow	Predict	Recognize	Reorganize	Recommend
Mark	Gather	Prepare	Relate	Revise	Score
Match	Generalize	Prescribe	Separate	Synthesize	Validate
Name	Give example	Present	Structure	Transform	Make judgments on basis of given criteria
Order	Illustrate	Produce	Examine information to identify motives or causes, make inferences, determine relationships or draw conclusions	Apply prior knowledge and skills to produce something new	
Outline	Interpolate	Propose			
Point	Itemize	Restructure			
Read	Locate	Schedule			
Recall	Paraphrase	Show			
Recite	Quote	Solve			
Repeat	Report	Utilize			
Reproduce	Restate	Use previously learned information in new situations			
Specify	Summarize				
State	Discover the meaning of information				
Write					
Retrieve learned information					

Common problems with objectives

- o Problem: Beginning with a poor verb (i.e. understand, learn) that is too generic and hard to measure.

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- o Solution: Think about what participants should be able to do with the information. Should they be able to recite? Utilize? Discriminate? Reconstruct? Use the verb charts to choose a more accurate verb.
- o Problem: Objective is from the wrong point of view – the presenters.
- o Solution: Remember, the objective is for the learner to know what they can expect to achieve. Begin your objectives with the phrase “At the conclusion of this activity, the participant will be able to” to help you keep the learner in mind.

Verbs or phrases to avoid

Acknowledge	Appreciate	Be aware of...	Be conscious of...	Believe
Comprehend	Grasp	Internalize	Realize	Sense
Understand	Value			

Having trouble?

The CME Office can help you establish good objectives for your content and audience.

Skill Verbs

Skill verbs describe the ability of a participant to perform at task or follow a procedure.

Advance	Anchor	Assort	Build	Carry
Climb	Converse	Convert	Demonstrate	Enlarge
Enter	Equip	Execute	Fabricate	Fill
Finish	Fix	Furnish	Gather	Generate
Grind	Heave	Inscribe	Inspect	Intersect
Juggle	Make	Manipulate	Observe	Operate
Perform	Practice	Proceed	Rebuild	Recast
Remodel	Straighten	Transfer	Transpose	Work

Attitude Verbs

Attitude objectives describe the feelings, values, and attitudes of the learner. These objectives are the most difficult to measure. It is difficult to measure internal thoughts and feelings of participants. Please consider if this is the most appropriate verb for your objectives and presentation before using an attitude verb. Also, please make any attitude objectives as measurable as possible.

Accept	Admit	Allow	Aspire	Attain
Belong	Commend	Concur	Confer	Correspond
Dedicate	Deserve	Engage	Enhance	Enlist
Excel	Exhibit	Express	Flatter	Fulfill
Impart	Impel	Incite	Induce	Invigorate
Motivate	Perceive	Reinforce	Stimulate	Urge