

Writing Strong Learning Objectives

Every lesson you lead has the potential to be great or to have unforeseen challenges crop up. But a sure ingredient in a recipe for disaster is “winging it.” As in: “I’m not sure what I’ll do today, I’ll just make it up as I go.” To ensure the right balance of engagement and structure, you should *plan* the lesson, *gather* materials needed, list the *procedure* you will follow, and *prepare* for potential problems and pitfalls. Proper planning leads to less stress for you and more learning for your participants. We often hear programs say they run out of time for de-brief or reflection in their activities. By tightening up the overall lesson plan every lesson can go from being an engaging activity to a transformational or insightful learning experience for your participants.

THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Why are learning objectives important? Learning objectives communicate to youth what they will be doing and how they will be learning. By writing strong learning objectives you help youth make intentional connections to the learning process and the developmental skills they are building to support their learning.

Lesson plans do not consist of statements such as: “Today we’ll learn about conflict.” Rather, lesson plans are designs for learning. They include these basics:

Objectives. What will students be able to do at the end of this lesson? It should be observable and measurable. FOR EXAMPLE:

- *Students will **learn** to recite the letters of the alphabet.*
- *Students will **practice** a sing a song in three part harmony.*
- *Students will **access** information from an Internet search engine.*
- *Students will **follow** four recipes to prepare a meal.*
- *Students will **apply** charcoal shading techniques to create a self-portrait.*
- *Students will **work** in teams to develop a social change action plan.*

Strong learning objectives fall into six categories. The best curriculum contains a combination of these various learning objectives, to ensure holistic learning for participants.

1. **Knowledge:** Common terms, facts, principles, procedures
2. **Comprehension:** Understanding of facts and principles, interpretation of material
3. **Application:** Solving problems, applying concepts and principles to new situations
4. **Analysis:** Recognizing unstated assumptions or logical fallacies, ability to distinguish between facts and inferences, ability to make connections between unlike ideas
5. **Synthesis:** Integrating learning from different areas, solving problems using creative thinking
6. **Evaluation:** Interpreting learning; Judging, Assessing

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Writing Strong Learning Objectives, continued

LEARNING OBJECTIVES WORD BANK

The following word bank is a simple way to create strong learning objectives and ensure your lessons are covering a range of learning categories.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Count	Associate	Add	Analyze	Categorize	Appraise
Define	Compute	Apply	Arrange	Combine	Assess
Describe	Convert	Calculate	Breakdown	Compile	Compare
Draw	Defend	Change	Combine	Compose	Conclude
Identify	Discuss	Classify	Design	Create	Contrast
Labels	Distinguish	Complete	Detect	Drive	Criticize
List	Estimate	Compute	Develop	Design	Critique
Match	Explain	Demonstrate	Diagram	Devise	Determine
Name	Extend	Discover	Differentiate	Explain	Grade
Outlines	Extrapolate	Divide	Discriminate	Generate	Interpret
Point	Generalize	Examine	Illustrate	Group	Judge
Quote	Give	Graph	Infer	Integrate	Justify
Read	examples	Interpolate	Outline	Modify	Measure
Recall	Infer	Manipulate	Point	Order	Rank
Recite	Paraphrase	Modify	out	Organize	Rate
Recognize	Predict	Operate	Relate	Plan	Support
Record	Rewrite	Prepare	Select	Prescribe	Test
Repeat	Summarize	Produce	Separate	Propose	
Reproduces		Show	Subdivide	Rearrange	
Selects		Solve	Utilize	Reconstruct	
State		Subtract		Related	
Write		Translate		Reorganize	
		Use		Revise	
				Rewrite	
				Summarize	
				Transform	
				Specify	

Source: Bloom's taxonomy