

AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES FOR WRITING INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

STEP I Write your objectives according to what is expected of the learner, not what you will do.

- Incorrect: I will have each participant list the four elements in the adult learning model.
Correct: Each learner will list the four elements in the adult learning model.
- Incorrect: I will present a definition of clinical algorithms to the learner.
Correct: The learners will define the concept of clinical algorithms.

Correct examples written from learner's point of view; incorrect examples written from the presenter's point of view.

STEP II Make the behavior or verb of your objective clear and measurable. Behaviors can be written on different levels (see Table A). Changing levels, as described in the table, requires some modification in the teaching techniques and time required. As a general rule, knowledge level behaviors can be taught in a short period of time while objectives at the evaluation level will take much longer periods of time. Probably you will be concerned with only the knowledge and comprehension levels.

- Incorrect: Each learner will know the four elements in the adult learning model.
Correct: Each learner will list the four elements in the adult learning model.

List is more specific than know and is open to fewer interpretations. (Check Table A for more examples of specific behaviors.)

- Incorrect: Each learner will understand the concept of clinical algorithms.
Correct: The learners will write a definition of the concept of clinical algorithms.

In this example, write is more specific than understand and is open to fewer interpretations.

STEP III Make the content of your objective as specific as possible.

- OK: Each learner will list elements in an adult learning model.
Better: Each learner will list the four elements in Knowles adult learning model.

The 'Better' example specifies the exact number of elements and the specific model which the participant is expected to learn. The 'OK' example does not specify the number of elements nor does it specify the exact adult learning model.

- OK: Each learner will be able to write definitions for current terms used in continuing education.
Better: Each learner will write a definition for the following terms: self-directed learning, certification, and CEUs.

'Better' example specified exact terms; the 'OK' example was vague. "Current terms" has different meanings to different people.

Table A

SOME POSSIBLE VERBS FOR USE IN STATING COGNITIVE OUTCOMES ¹					
1.00 Knowledge define repeat record list recall name relate	2.00 Comprehension translate restate discuss describe recognize explain express identify	3.00 Application interpret apply employ use demonstrate dramatize practice illustrate operate schedule	4.00 Analysis distinguish analyze interpret appraise calculate use experiment test compare practice criticize diagram inspect	5.00 Synthesis compose plan propose design formulate arrange assemble collect construct create set up organize manage	6.00 Evaluation judge appraise evaluate rate compare value revise score select choose assess estimate measure

¹ Compliments of Marybelle Savage: Johnson & Johnson. Assuring Learning w/Self-Instructional Packages, Self-Instructional Packages, Inc., 1973.