

## Course Learning Objectives

A clear learning objective states what the learner will be able to do upon completion of an education activity, identifying the sustained performance or demonstration as an outcome of the educational offering.

When writing learning objectives, the recommended A-B-C-D steps can inform the instructor's process. *A-B-C-D* stands for *Audience*, *Behavior*, *Condition*, and *Degree*, describing the major components of learning objective. Then, the specific knowledge or skill outcome is identified.

**Step A:** *Audience* describes the intended learners of a given outcome (typically "Students"). Objectives should be learner-centered, placing the learner as the active subject.

"Students will be able to..."

**Step B:** *Behavior* describes how the learner's knowledge or skill is shared ("explain," "analyze," "create").

Connect the learner to the object of demonstration with an action verb communicating an observed and measurable outcome manageable within the learning timeframe.

"Students will be able to describe and demonstrate..."

### Sample Verbs to Utilize\*

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
define	classify	apply	analyze	arrange	assess
identify	compile	calculate	calculate	assemble	compare
label	conclude	demonstrate	categorize	compose	critique
list	discuss	develop	classify	construct	decide
match	describe	interpret	criticize	design	determine
name	explain	locate	compare	develop	establish
recall	express	operate	contrast	diagnose	evaluate
recognize	give examples	perform	determine	manage	judge
record	identify	practice	differentiate	organize	justify
relate	interpret	predict	distinguish	plan	measure
repeat	recognize	present	examine	propose	rate
select	summarize	report	outline	relate	recommend
state	translate	use	test	summarize	select

\*Adapted from: Bloom B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*. New York: David McKay Co Inc.

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### Verbs to Avoid

believe, value	Assessing beliefs and values can result in ethical judgments. Inclusive pedagogy can assess learners' ability to identify, analyze or critique beliefs and values, regardless of whether the learner subscribes to them.
appreciate, enjoy, find passion	It is very difficult to assess authentic emotion in a culturally inclusive manner.* Observing what we perceive as joy and passion in learners' experiences may truly be the greatest gift of teaching, but not the greatest measure for fair assessment.
think critically, understand	Neuroimaging is not a common requirement of learning assessment. Learners more commonly create evidence—written text, performance, visualization, etc.—which demonstrate thinking skills, such as critique, analysis, classification, etc.
improve, learn, become, grow	Outcomes requiring learners to gain knowledge or skill suggest that learners did not have that skill/knowledge prior to the experience. If growth is a necessary component of evaluation, assessment must include a pre-test and post-test analysis. Otherwise, replace the element of change with identification of the endpoint outcome.

\* Research on identifying emotion from a cultural and psychological perspective is discussed in [Beck, 2015](#)

**Step C: Condition** describes physical and temporal features of the outcome (“within,” “undergirding,” “verbally,” “by the end of term”).

Generally, the temporal condition for course learning objectives can be assumed to be at the end of the course unless otherwise stated. Required prior knowledge should be transparently communicated as a prerequisite. If a specific medium for demonstrating learning is required, it should be described as a physical condition within the learning objective.

“Students will be able to verbally describe and physically demonstrate...”

**Step D (optional): Degree** describes the type of attainment (“with guidance,” “upon revision,” “collaboratively,” etc.).

By default, most learning objectives can be considered an independently-achieved, fully-developed outcome. If the objective includes a process outcome, external support or collaboration, identify where on the continuum of learning the objective falls.

“In collaboration, students will be able to verbally describe and physically demonstrate...”

**Final Step:** Identify the specific, expected product(ion) or content of the learning outcome.

“In collaboration, students will be able to verbally describe and physically demonstrate the fundamentals, qualities and actions of Laban Movement Analysis.”