

# Writing Effective Learning Objectives

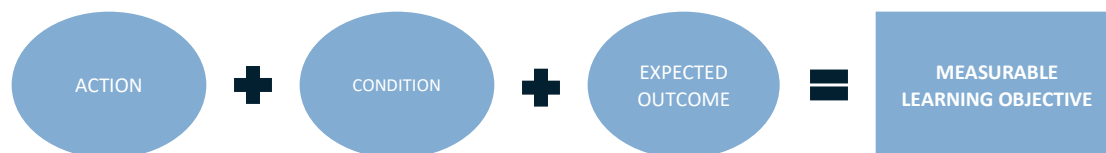
## Purpose

An effective learning objective (LO) is a clearly written, measurable statement of the action a learner should be able to demonstrate upon completion of an accredited continuing education activity. An effective learning objective identifies the expected change in competence (know how) and performance (skill improvement) to be achieved by the learner. Learning objectives can address knowledge (K), skills (S) or attitudes (A).

## Writing Objectives

When writing objectives start with the opening statement, ***At the end of this activity, learners should be able to...*** followed by three key components:

1. **Action Verb:** Define the single observable action that you would expect the learner to be able to demonstrate following the activity.
2. **Condition:** Describe the situation in which the expected action will occur (e.g.: patient population, clinical situation)
3. **Expected Outcome:** Describe the expected improvement in competence, performance or patient outcomes. Align this with the overall desired practice for the education for maximum effectiveness.



## Example

**Poor Wording:** Understand how to modulate pain therapy by addressing psychological and personality issues. **Why?** The term “understand” is not measurable; and context regarding the patient’s condition is absent.

**Better Wording:** Modulate pain therapy by addressing psychological and personality issues in patients with chronic pain.

## Sample Verbs\*

Knowledge	Comprehension	Applying	Analyzing	Synthesizing	Creating
Define	Classify	Demonstrate	Compare	Appraise	Assemble
Duplicate	Describe	Dramatize	Contrast	Argue	Construct
List	Discuss	Employ	Criticize	Defend	Create
Memorize	Explain	Illustrate	Differentiate	Judge	Design
Recall	Identify	Interpret	Discriminate	Select	Develop
Reproduce	Recognize	Operate	Distinguish	Support	Formulate
State	Translate	Solve	Examine	Evaluate	Write

\*based on [Bloom’s Taxonomy \(2002\)](#)

## Words to Avoid

Appreciate Approach Become Enjoy Improve Increase Know Learn Think Understand

## References

Sharp CME Faculty Development Series – Writing Learning Objectives (2020)