Learning Objectives

What is a Learning Objective? A learning objective is defined as a statement that describes the behavior the trainer expects participants to demonstrate as a result of the training, and can be used to evaluate the success of the session.

Why have Learning Objectives? Creating clear learning objectives during the planning process of a session during a training course serves 3 main purposes: gives the learners a clear idea of what to expect to learn and what is expected of them after the session, gives the trainer a goal to achieve in presenting the content of a session, and forms the basis for evaluating the trainer, learner, and course effectiveness.

What are the characteristics of Learning Objectives? Learning objectives should be S.M.A.R.T., that is:

S – Specific – says exactly what the learner will be able to do
M – Measurable – can be observed by the end of the training session
A – Attainable for the participants within scheduled time and specified conditions
R – Relevant to the needs of the participant and the organization
T – Time-framed - achievable by the end of the training session

What are the components of Learning Objectives? Learning objectives can include 3 components: performance, conditions, and criteria.

Performance All SMART learning objectives contain a performance component. The performance statement describes what the learner will know or be able to do in specific, measurable terms. The statement should contain an action verb.

Conditions A learning objective may include conditions. Conditions describe the circumstances under which the participant will learn. Conditions can include tools, situations, settings, or restrictions that will direct the activity.

Criteria Criteria describe the required level of quality of performance. Criteria can be described in terms of accuracy (minimum/maximum), productivity level, time, and degree of excellence.

Please note: Conditions and criteria are not necessary for an objective to be SMART, but can assist in the measurement and level of specificity of the objective.

How can I create useful SMART Learning Objectives?

To create *Specific, Measurable***,** *Relevant, and Time-framed* **objectives:**
- It's helpful to start with the phrase "By the end of this session the participant will be able to…." (often abbreviated "BTEOTSTPWBAT") and finish the sentence.
- Add an observable action verb that describes what the participant should be able to do (see charts on attached pages for examples of action verbs).
- Avoid difficult to define verbs that are open to a variety of interpretations (e.g., understand, learn, grasp); use instead terms that describe directly observable behaviors.
- When necessary, specify criteria concerning expected standard of performance (e.g., "Design a plan for your girls to earn the 'Movers' Try-It, including supplies and equipment needed, time estimates, and a description of the activities.")

To create *Attainable* **learning objectives:**
- Consider the lowest skill/understanding level of the participants and write your objective to move them to the next level.
- Consider and specify the conditions under which the performance of the objective will take place (e.g., "On your next troop campout….." or "At a Brownie troop meeting…..")
- Limit the number of objectives to major learning points you would like the participants to take from the session.

Remember that a SMART Learning Objective:

- Is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-framed.
- Is a statement describing an intended outcome.
- Describes intended participant performance by the end of the training session.
- Describes participant performance, rather than trainer performance or instructional procedure.

Writing a SMART Learning Objective - A Checklist

To help your SMART Learning Objectives communicate what you intend, make sure that they answer the following questions with the answer "yes".

- Is your main intent stated?
- Is the indicator behavior the simplest and most direct one you can think of?
- Is relevant to the topic of the training?
- Is it attainable in the time you have for the session?
- Have you described how well the learner must perform to be considered acceptable?

Suggested Action Verbs for Learning Objectives

Here is a sample list of verbs that can be used when writing learning objectives. These verbs indicate activities that are measurable and specific.

assemble	diagram	make	relate
assess	differentiate	measure	repeat
attempt	discriminate	memorize	rephrase
calculate	distinguish	modify	represent
categorize	document	name	restate
challenge	draw	operate	review
change	estimate	organize	select
choose	evaluate	originate	separate
classify	explain	paraphrase	show
combine	fill in	perform	specify
compare	give example	plan	state
compose	give in own words	prepare	suggest
conclude	identify	produce	summarize
construct	illustrate	propose	tell
define	indicate	rank	transform
demonstrate	judge	rearrange	translate
describe	justify	recall	use
design	label	recognize	verbalize
determine	list	recommend	write
develop	locate	record	

Steps To Writing Objectives

STEP ONE: Write down the goal.

STEP TWO: Jot down, in words and phrases, the performances that, if achieved, would cause you to agree the goal is achieved.

STEP THREE: Sort out the jottings. Delete duplications and unwanted items. Repeat steps One and Two for any remaining abstractions (fuzzies) considered important.

STEP FOUR: Write a complete statement for each performance, describing the nature, quality, or amount you will consider acceptable.

STEP FIVE: Test the statements with the question: "If someone achieved or demonstrated each of these performances, would I be willing to say they have achieved the goal?" When you can answer yes, the analysis is finished.

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