

How to Write Learning Objectives

Introduction: Why write learning objectives?

Well-designed learning events use:

- a) overall learning objectives as statements that describe the goals of the program.
- b) specific learning objectives as information to participants about what they can expect to learn from each element in the program.

Well-written learning objectives help participants to select continuing medical education that will meet their identified learning needs.

How to write learning objectives

A simple method for tackling learning objective-writing is to complete this statement: *“By the end of this [name of event, e.g., workshop / simulation / presentation], participants will be equipped to”*

Now follow this stem with an active verb that specifies desirable learning outcomes. For example:

- Objectives related to learning new knowledge (CPGs for example) might use *describe, explain, list, calculate, apply, select, design, critique, solve ...*
- Objectives centred on diagnostic abilities might use *assess, differentiate, investigate, distinguish, recognize, establish, identify, diagnose...*
- Objectives about managing patient conditions might use *plan, prescribe, implement, manage, choose, treat, advise, recommend, teach...*
- Objectives concerning development of new skills might use *intubate, fixate, suture, repair, resuscitate, cannulate, perform, image, demonstrate, reduce...*
- Objectives that focus on changing beliefs or attitudes might use *accept, challenge, persuade, empathize, advocate, defend, recommend...*

As participants' new knowledge, skills or attitudes are the measure of success of the activity, avoid using vague verbs that would make this difficult to assess; so avoid *understand, appreciate, know, believe, be aware of*. Also avoid verbs that describe the teaching processes used during the activity, such as *review, discuss, read, learn about, examine*.

Now add detail about the content and if possible, be specific about which conditions participants should be able to use this new learning under, and to what extent or degree.

Example:

Poor Learners will *review* principles and *become familiar with* common pathologies in ECG interpretation

Better After this workshop, participants will be able to:

- a) demonstrate a systematic approach to 12-lead ECG interpretation
- b) identify areas of ischemia, injury, and infarct on a 12-lead strip
- c) identify axis deviation on a 12-lead strip