

Outcome-Based Goals and Objectives

A **course goal** is a general expectation, often written in broad, overarching, student-achievement terms. (Trice 2000) For example, one might identify the following: *The goal of this course is to gain an appreciation of the roots of popular music.*

Goals are measured using **student learning objectives**. An objective (also sometimes referred to as an outcome) is a specific expectation written so as to be clear about an action a student will be able to perform as a result of instruction. (Trice 2000) An objective should address only one, specific area. Here is an example: *At the end of the course, given a list of musicians, a successful student will correctly identify 9 of the 12 musical icons of the late 1990's.*

Objectives should be written in such a way that one can assess a student's success or failure at meeting the objective.

Objectives should be written using the following criteria (Mager 1997):

1. Performance (what is expected of the student)
2. Conditions (as related to the performance)
3. Criterion (acceptable/successful level of performance)

Examples:

1. Given a compilation CD of popular songs from the 1990's, correctly identify the song title and writer with at least 80% accuracy.
2. Given two of the songs we discussed in class, write an essay for each describing the socio-political references made in each of the songs. Essays must correctly describe at least three of the socio-political references discussed in class and should be free of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors.

The following represent common mistakes found in (outcome-based) learning objectives:

- Using performances not stated in measurable terms
 - “to develop understanding”; “develop an appreciation”; “know” (To develop an appreciation for rock music of the 1990's) **See the first example above for a good way to restate these types of objectives.**
- Using criteria that describe a task that does **not** prove one's mastery of the task
 - *Write a 5 page essay on the theory of music.* (The number of pages is the sole criteria. Is the essay's length (5 pages long) really the key to this objective?) **See the second example above for an example of this objective restated.**
- Using instructional objectives rather than learning objectives
 - *Be able to discuss the main points of chapter 5.* (Discussion is the instructional method, so what is the performance for this objective? **Try restating the objective to say something like: Given the topic of a chapter, students will be able to correctly identify 80% of the main points....**)
- Using improvement in learning instead of a performance standard
 - “Increase knowledge of” or “Increase skill in” (Increase one's skill in typing) **Reword using a performance criterion like in the following: Type 45 words per minute with no more than X errors.**

The following table lists some verbs commonly used in creating learning objectives.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Recall	Abstract	Apply	Analyze	Build	Assess
Identify	Convert	Carry out	Classify	Design	Check
Recognize	Extrapolate	Explain	Compare	Organize	Evaluate
Acquire	Interpret	Generalize	Distinguish	Produce	Measure
Distinguish	Transform	Plan	Identify	Theorize	Rank
	Translate	Repair	Recognize	Write	Test

-- adapted from Bloom 1956

On a syllabus, one can list student learning objectives as a bulleted list of only the performance components and save the more detailed objective when discussing or describing the individual assignments. An example of this is:

By the end of the semester, the successful student can expect to:
Identify writers and titles of popular songs
Describe the socio-political references of songs
Type at least 45 words per minute

Resources for creating student learning objectives

Books:

Bloom, B.S. (Ed.) (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The classification of educational goals: Handbook I, Cognitive Domain*. New York ; Toronto: Longmans, Green.

Gronlund, N. E. (2000). *How to Write and Use Instructional Objectives*. Upper Saddle River, N.J., Merrill. **[ILTE number 0588]**

Mager, R. F. (1997). *Preparing Instructional Objectives: A Critical Tool in the Development of Effective Instruction*, third edition. Atlanta, Ga., Center for Effective Performance. **[ILTE number 0612]**

Trice, A. D. (2000). *A Handbook of Classroom Assessment*. New York, Longman. **[ILTE number 0655]**

Online:

We have a list of PDFs and links relating to the development of learning objectives available on our website.

http://ilte.ius.edu/learning_objectives/