Pediatric Endocrinology Nursing Society
Advancing Endocrine and Diabetes Care

Tips for Writing Learning Objectives

What Are Learning Objectives?

It may be best to start with what learning objectives aren't: They aren't simply a list of the topics to be covered in the session. Certainly, there will be a body of knowledge that participants should know and understand by the time the session is complete. But if the goals for what participants should achieve stops there, there may be many missed opportunities for providing them with a more productive learning experience.

A learning objective should describe what participants should know or be able to do at the end of the session that they couldn't do before. Learning objectives should be about participant performance. Good learning objectives shouldn't be too abstract, too narrow or be restricted to lower-level cognitive skills.

Each individual learning objective should support the overarching goal of the session, that is, *the thread that unites all the topics that will be covered and all the skills participants should have mastered by the end of the session. Best practice dictates that learning objectives be kept to between 3 and 5.*

Writing Learning Objectives

Experts often talk about using the acronym S—K—A to frame learning objectives. SKA stands for:

Skills What participants should be able to do by the time the session is complete.

Knowledge What participants should know and understand by the time the session is complete.

Attitudes What the participants' opinions will be about the subject matter of the session by the time it is complete.

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It is best to identify the skills, knowledge, and attitudes the participants should gain throughout the session by writing sentences that begin: **By the time the participants finish this session, they should be able to . . .** and then supplying a **strong, action verb**. Examples of verbs that define participant performance in a particular area include:

- list
- discuss
- define
- identify
- describe
- explain
- report
- compare
- demonstrate
- analyze
- calculate

After your objective is written, drop the highlighted phrase above to simply begin the objective with the strong, action verb.

Some instructors use well-defined learning taxonomies to create their course objectives. Learning taxonomies, the most well-known of which is Bloom's *Taxonomy of Objectives for the Cognitive Domain* (1956), categorize cognitive tasks, usually in increasingly sophisticated order. A group of educators, led by Benjamin Bloom, identified a hierarchy of six categories of cognitive skills: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. As participants learn, they start with the knowledge level and progress through the hierarchy. Thus, advanced sessions should include skills at a higher level than introductory or basic skills sessions. On the next page you will find a list of measurable verbs to assist you in writing course objectives and assess learning outcomes.

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List of Measurable Verbs Used to Assess Learning Outcomes

Knowledge Level: The successful participant will recognize or recall learned information.

list	record	underline
state	define	arrange
name	relate	describe
tell	recall	memorize
recall	repeat	recognize
label	select	reproduce

Comprehension Level: The successful participant will restate or interpret information in their own words.

explain	describe	report
translate	express	summarize
identify	classify	discuss
restate	locate	compare
discuss	review	illustrate
tell	critique	estimate
reference	interpret	reiterate

Application Level: The successful participant will use or apply the learned information.

apply	sketch	perform
use	solve	respond
practice	construct	role-play
demonstrate	conduct	execute
complete	dramatize	employ

Analysis Level: The successful participant will examine the learned information critically.

analyze	inspect	test
distinguish	categorize	critique
differentiate	catalogue	diagnose
appraise	quantify	extrapolate
calculate	measure	theorize
experiment	relate	debate

Synthesis Level: The successful participant will create new models using the learned information.

develop	revise	compose
plan	formulate	collect
build	propose	construct
create	establish	prepare
design	integrate	devise
organize	modify	manage

Evaluation Level: The successful participant will assess or judge the value of learned information.

review	appraise	choose
justify	argue	conclude
assess	rate	compare
defend	score	evaluate
report on	select	interpret
investigate	measure	support