



Learning Objectives: In-Depth & Best Practices

Wendy Romero

September 9, 2020



This workshop will explore:

- What are learning objectives?
- Why we should use them?
- How to best write these statements?
- What are SMART Objectives?
- What is Bloom's Taxonomy?
- What are the best practices?
- What are Module Level Objectives?
- Additional Resources
- Q&A



What are Learning Objectives?

Learning objectives/outcomes are specific statements that tell the student what they will be able to do at the conclusion of a learning experience.

The learning experience is identified as either a program of study or major, a specific course within a program, a specific module or learning component within a course, or specific lesson within a single class session.

For Example:

Program of Study	Digital Arts and Design
Specific Course	ART 121: 2D Design
Learning Module or Unit	Color
Specific Lesson within a single class session	Properties of Color

Why should we use Learning Objectives?

- Effective teaching relies on effective planning and good course design.
- Preparing a high-quality course, we should first start with clearly defined educational goals.
- In planning your course, you should write explicit statements that outline what your students will be able to do at the end of the course.
- We want to identify for the students, what concepts need to be learned, and the skills they need to acquire and be able to apply.



Writing learning objectives helps teachers...

- Plan appropriate teaching strategies.
- Plan the sequencing for instruction and/or recognize needed scaffolding for complex topics.
- Identify needed materials for lessons.
- Determine assessment methods.

Writing learning objectives helps students...

- Know what is expected of them.
- Know what they will get from an educational experience.
- Know in advance how they will be assessed.



How to write learning objectives?

Writing learning objectives should be **SMART**:

- Student-centered & Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable & Achievable
- Relevant & Realistic
- Time-bound

* Add Concise

Statement Construction

Simple statement construction: (Who) + (measurable action verb) + (content area)

Here is an example:

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate the use of design elements and principles within his/her own artwork and the artwork of others.
- Demonstrate skills in using a working vocabulary of design terminology.
- Demonstrate the proper and skillful use of a variety of materials, tools, and techniques.



Bloom's Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom and others wrote a book called "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals" in 1956.

Bloom's Taxonomy provided six categories that described the cognitive processes of learning: **knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.**

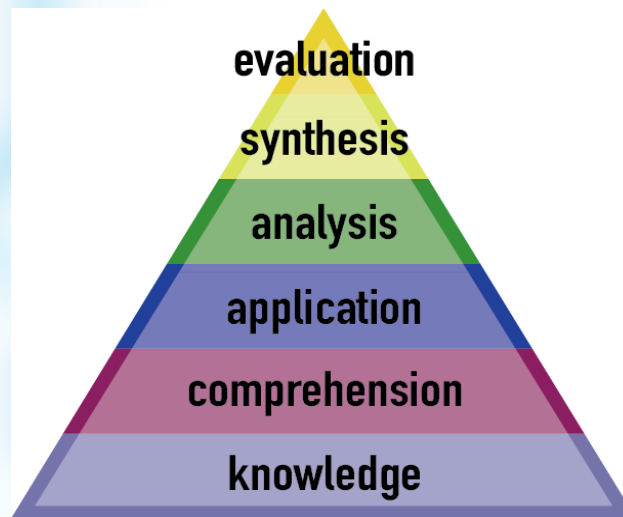
The categories were meant to represent educational activities of increasing complexity and abstraction.

Aim for higher cognitive levels rather than simple recall. Use verbs such as analyze, synthesize, evaluate, explain, etc.

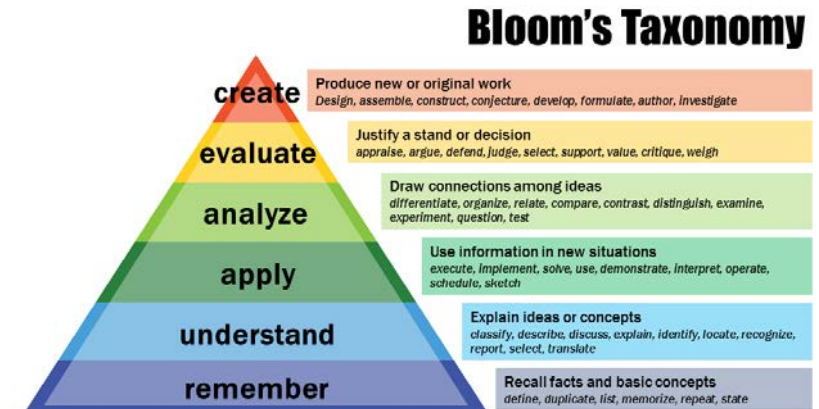
[Bloom's Taxonomy](#)



Bloom's Taxonomy



Original



Revised

 Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching

Best Practices

Keep statements short and focused on a **single outcome**. Not only does this make it easier for the student to understand what is expected of them but it helps the instructor be able to determine if an objective has been met rather than partially met.

Learning objectives **must be measurable**. Use action verbs that describe what a student will be able to do once learning has happened. When writing, keep in mind how you might measure the learning objective. Align the objective with an instrument for assessment, such as: test, paper, project, presentation. Likewise, think of the types of artifacts that can be collected as evidence of said learning.

Learning objectives should be **student-focused** and target the expected student outcome. To help with this, start learning objectives with the phrase "At the end of this course, the learner/student will be able to. . ."

Best practice is that each course will have 4-6 learning objectives.



Overt and Covert Objectives

In addition, be sure to write learning objectives that are overt, meaning that they can be directly observed. Whereas, learning objectives that are covert are not directly observable. Terms like “understand” or “determine” are very difficult to directly observe; thus, making it challenging to assess.

Avoid using verbs that are vague or cannot be objectively assessed such as: believe, improve, increase, know, learn, or understand. It’s not to say this can’t be said or identified as a goal of the course, but this type should be included under a general course goals and not as learning objectives that must be measurable.

Here is an example



This course strives to meet these program learning outcomes (PLO):

1. Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate visual solutions.
2. Demonstrate competency in using terminology of the discipline.
3. Demonstrate competency in visual skill sets and tools.
4. Demonstrate conceptual development, creative thinking and visual problem solving.
5. Demonstrate an appreciation for the historical framework regarding principles and purposes of visual works.

Course Objectives: At the conclusion of this courses, students will:

- A. Demonstrate skills in using a working vocabulary of design terminology (PLO 2);
Assessment: Critique, Homework Assignments, and Writing Assignments
- B. Use theories in visual language and communication to create visual solutions (PLO 1, 2, 4, 5);
Assessment: Critique, Homework Assignments, and Projects
- C. Design visual solutions (PLO 1, 3 ,4);
Assessment: Assignments, Homework Assignments, and Projects
- D. Evaluate the use of design elements and principles within his/her own artwork and the artwork of others (PLO 1, 2, 5);
Assessment: Critique and Writing Assignments
- E. Demonstrate the proper and skillful use of a variety of materials, tools, and techniques (PLO 3).
Assessment: Assignments, Homework Assignments, and Projects

[Alignment Chart by Dr. Nicky Khattapan](#)



What are Module Level Learning Objectives?

MODULE/UNIT LEVEL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Module/unit level learning objectives are the next smaller unit of learning under course objectives. Think of it like how you create might scaffold a complex idea into parts to help a student better learn.

Here is an example:

Course Outcomes/Objective: Upon completion of this course, learners will demonstrate the mastery of rules of punctuation.

Module-Level Objectives:

1. Learners will write sentences that demonstrate correct use of commas, semicolons, and periods.
2. Learners will use apostrophes when, and only when, needed.
3. Learners will use double and single quotation marks correctly in quoted material.



Additional Resources

- [Iowa State University: Revised Bloom's Taxonomy](#)
- [Frameworks & Taxonomies of Learning](#)
- [Johns Hopkins University: Guide to Bloom's Taxonomy](#)
- [Module Objectives](#) University of Wisconsin - Madison
- [Course Mapping](#)



Q&A





References

- “Appendix A: Examples of Learning Outcomes.” *Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation*, University of Toronto, 19 Aug. 2015, teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-learning-outcomes/appendix-a-examples-of-learning-outcomes/. Accessed 29 Jan. 2019.
- Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, E. J., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals*. New York, NY: Longmans, Green and Co.
- “Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes.” Teaching Commons: Center for Teaching and Learning, DePaul University, resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/course-design/Pages/course-objectives-learning-outcomes.aspx. Accessed 29 August 2020.
- “Guidelines for Writing Effective Learning Objectives.” *Guidelines for Writing Effective Learning Objectives: Instructional Design*, canvas.instructure.com/courses/803402/pages/guidelines-for-writing-effective-learning-objectives. Accessed 31 Jan. 2019.
- Hall, Macie. *The Innovative Instructor*, 20 July 2016, ii.library.jhu.edu/2016/07/20/writing-effective-learning-objectives/. Accessed 31 Jan. 2019.
- McDaniel, Rhett. “Bloom's Taxonomy.” *Vanderbilt University*, Vanderbilt University, 25 Mar. 2020, cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/.
- “Writing Quality Learning Objectives” Park University, captain.park.edu/facultydevelopment/writing_learning_objectives.htm. Accessed 31 January 2019.

DSU: CTL Fellow



Wendy M. Romero, M.F.A.
Associate Professor of Art & Design /
DAD Program Coordinator

Department

College of Arts and Sciences

Biography

Professor Wendy Romero is an Associate Professor of Art and Design (DAD) and the Program Coordinator for Digital Arts and Design. While she is rather new to DSU, coming on board in 2018, she has been teaching since 2004. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Savannah College of Art and Design and a Master of Fine Arts from Georgia Southern University.

Professor Romero is passionate about engaging students in the classroom and focuses much of her efforts in offering active and experiential learning for her students. She has been a part of many aspects of teaching during her career, working with first year students adjust to campus life to working with seniors in their final capstone courses. She is also involved in general education all the way through DAD program coursework. She has a wealth of knowledge in assessment and is actively engaged in student success here at DSU. She is on the Higher Learning Commission's Student Success Academy team and the EAB implementation team.

In addition to teaching, Professor Romero is an active mixed media painter, portrait photographer, and graphic designer. She brings with her lots of enthusiasm, interest in learning new things, and a commitment to teaching and learning.

Contact

Office Location: Beadle Hall

Phone: 605-256-5272

[Email](#)