



What is an Objective?

A behavioral objective, also called a performance, instructional or learner objective, is “an intent communicated by a statement describing a proposed change in a learner – a statement of what the learner is to be like when he/she has successfully completed a learning experience” (Mager, 1984). Or, an objective is a statement of an observable behavior that the learner is to exhibit at the close of a program, course or learning session. Stated in another way, a behavioral objective is a description of a proposed behavioral change that the teacher wants to bring about in a learner — change in either the cognitive, psychomotor or affective domain of learning.

A performance objective is a three-part statement of what, in measurable terms, the learner must do to master a behavior (performance). A true performance objective has three identifiable parts: (1) a description of the behavior (**performance**), (2) the **conditions** under which the behavior (performance) will be measured and (3) the **criterion** that states how well the behavior must be performed to be considered mastered.

Three Types of Objectives

Another dimension of writing performance objectives relates to the various types of performance that can be specified. These include **knowing certain information** (classified as the cognitive domain), **performing certain physical activities** (the psychomotor domain) and **exhibiting certain personal qualities or attitudes** (the affective domain).

The **cognitive domain** includes those performances that require knowledge of specific information -- e.g., the principles, concepts and generalizations necessary for problem solving.

The **psychomotor domain** measures the skill performance of the learner and, therefore, the performance required will involve the manipulation of objects, tools, supplies or equipment.

In the **affective domain**, the performance required involves the demonstration of feelings, attitudes or sensitivities toward other people, ideas or things.



This Technical Note is from a series on Effective Teaching and Learning. Modernizing an extension and advisory services system in any location requires competent field agents and others who know and/or have access to content needed at the local level and are able to teach that content using proven teaching strategies and methodology. These technical papers should be utilized by anyone involved in the training of extension professionals.

Writing Objectives

An objective is a statement that describes what the learner must do to demonstrate mastery of a task. As noted above, all performance objectives include three basic components: (1) conditions, (2) behavior, and (3) criterion.

CONDITIONS - The condition component of an objective informs the learner of what conditions or restrictions will be imposed when he/she is demonstrating mastery of a competency. The condition can describe what equipment, tools, supplies or resources the learner will be given to work with; any items the learner will not have access to; the setting where the competency must be performed; and/or what information the learner may be provided that will direct the action in a certain way. Some examples of condition statements are:

1. Given a set of blueprints . . .
2. Without the aid of a calculator . . .
3. Using a case study provided by the instructor . . .
4. Given a malfunctioning carburetor . . .

PERFORMANCE - The performance component of an objective is a statement of the actual competency. This statement identifies the performance or behavior that a student will be required to demonstrate. The behavior component of a performance objective should be precise, observable and measurable. A list of words -- often called *action verbs* -- that can be used in writing the performance portion of an objective appears later in this paper.

CRITERION - The third component of an objective is called the criterion or standard. The criterion tells learners in what quantity and to what level of quality they are expected to perform the competency. There are several ways in which the criterion can be established, including: (1) specification of tolerance limits; (2) speed; (3) maximum number of permissible errors; (4) reference to other materials which specify standards; (5) degree of excellence; or (6) any combination of the above. All criteria should be based on the actual performance level needed on the job.

Classification of Educational Objectives

Bloom (1956) proposed the widely-accepted classification of educational objectives in the cognitive domain listed on the next page. While learning can and does take place in all six levels, the astute instructor utilizes a mixture of objectives in teaching and attempts to move the learners to the higher levels of thinking.

- ◆ Bloom, B.S. 1956. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals; Handbook I, Cognitive Domain*. New York: David McKay.
- ◆ Mager, R.F. 1984. *Preparing Instructional Objectives*. Belmont, Calif.: David S. Lake.

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Bloom's Classification of Educational Objectives

1. Knowledge -- recall or recognition

- A. Knowledge of specifics (terminology and facts)
- B. Knowledge of ways and means of dealing with specifics
 - 1. Characteristic way of presenting ideas and phenomena
 - 2. Processes and directions
 - 3. Classes, sets and divisions fundamental to a subject field
 - 4. Criteria by which facts, principles and conduct are tested
 - 5. Methods of inquiry, techniques and procedures employed in a subject field in investigating problems
- C. Knowledge of universals and abstractions
 - 1. 1. Principles and generalizations
 - 2. 2. Theories and structures

2. Comprehension -- understanding

- A. Translation — the accuracy with which the communication is paraphrased from one language to form another
- B. Interpretation — explanation or summarization of a communication
- C. Extrapolation — extension of trends beyond given data to determine implications

3. Application

- A. Use of abstractions in particular and concrete situations
- B. Abstractions may be general ideas, rules of procedure, technical principles and theories

4. Analysis -- breakdown of communication into its constituent elements

- A. Analysis of elements — recognize unstated assumptions; distinguish facts from hypotheses
- B. Analysis of relationships — comprehending interrelationships
- C. Analysis of organizational principles — systematic arrangement and structure

5. Synthesis -- putting elements together to form a whole

- A. Production of a unique communication
- B. Production of a plan or proposed set of operations
- C. Derivation of a set of abstract relations
 - 1. Classify or explain data or phenomena; formulate hypotheses
 - 2. Deduction of propositions and relations

6. Evaluation — quantitative and qualitative judgments about the extent to which material and methods satisfy criteria

- A. Judgments based on internal evidence — logical accuracy; consistency
- B. Judgments in terms of external criteria — evaluation with reference to selected or remembered criteria

Action Verbs for Writing Objectives in the Cognitive Domain

Several authors have provided helpful lists of action verbs that can be used to describe the **performance** that is to be achieved if the learner is to learn. Utilize a variety of performance measures, and aim toward teaching (and therefore assessing learning) at higher levels of cognition.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
acquire	associate	apply	analyze	arrange	appraise
count	classify	calculate	construct	categorize	assess
define	compare	change	detect	combine	compare
draw	compute	classify	diagram	construct	critique
identify	contrast	complete	differentiate	create	determine
indicate	convert	demonstrate	explain	design	evaluate
label	describe	discover	infer	develop	grade
list	differentiate	employ	outline	formulate	justify
match	discuss	examine	separate	generate	measure
name	distinguish	illustrate	subdivide	generalize	rank
outline	estimate	manipulate	summarize	integrate	rate
point	explain	operate		organize	recommend
quote	extrapolate	practice		plan	select
read	interpret	prepare		prepare	support
recall	interpolate	produce		prescribetest	
recite	predict	relate		produce	
recognize	rewrite	solve		propose	
record	translate	use		rearrange	
repeat		utilize		reconstruct	
state				specify	
tabulate				summarize	
trace					
write					

Summary

Good teaching begins with deciding what the learners need to know and/or be able to do as a result of participating in the program or activity.

Successful extension field agents work with the farmers and agribusiness operators and workers to find out the needs they have and then structure the teaching session around those needs.

Well-written objectives help ensure that the participants receive the information they need.

Disclaimer

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Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services

