

Writing Learning Objectives for the Modern Workplace

Taking the time to craft meaningful learning objectives prior to content design and development ensures that the final training product supports business goals and achieves the desired learning outcome. Writing learning objectives is one of the first steps in designing compelling learning activities.

At a Glance

A Snapshot of Learning Objectives

- Learning objectives are focused on the learner and are outcome-based.
- Learning objectives describe the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes that a learner will acquire as a result of completing the training.
- Learning objectives are performance-based behaviors that are measurable and observable.
- Learning objectives provide guidance for evaluation and the criteria that will be used for measurement.
- Learning objectives are required for all training content, whether a short job aid, a five-minute video, an eLearning course, or a three-day class.
- Learning objectives are built from a solid training needs analysis.
- Learning objectives are not the same as learning goals.

Key Terms

Bloom's Taxonomy

A classification system used to define and distinguish different levels of learning.

Learning Goal

A broad statement that identifies a unit of instruction

Learning Objective

An outcome statement that captures specifically what knowledge, skills and attitudes learners should be able to exhibit following instruction/ training

Training Needs Analysis

The first stage in training design and involves a procedure to determine whether training will indeed address the identified business gap.

WIIFM

Stands for "What's In It For Me?" In other words, what is the benefit for the learner?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about writing learning goals and objectives, consider the following resources:

- *Trainer Basics* by George M. Piskurich (Book)
- *Instructional Objectives: Targets for Instruction* by the LearningDctr (Video)

In Theory

Learning Goals versus Objectives

A learning solution is created in response to a **business or learner need** that has been defined as a result of conducting a **Training Needs Analysis**. That business or performance need is converted into **learning goals** and **objectives** when training is the performance improvement solution.

A **learning goal** provides a *high level statement of the purpose of a training program, but lacks measurability*. Typically it answers what areas the learner will be trained in and why it is important (WIIFM). An example of a training program goal for hypertension would be: *"to understand the cardiovascular system in order to sell hypertension treatment therapies."*

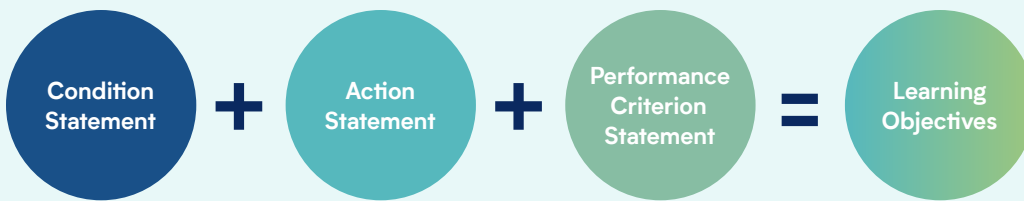
A **learning objective** (also called a performance or instructional objective) is a *statement that clearly expresses the behavior the trainer expects participants to demonstrate as a result of the training*.

Here are some important aspects for learning objectives:

- They are based on a solid training needs analysis for improving performance.
- They provide a roadmap to the design of a successful learner-centered training program.
- They provide guidelines for how to assess the program.
- They are learner-centered - focusing on what the learner will receive from the training.
- They are Adult Learning focused by creating relevant learning experiences.
- They are a communication channel between the trainer (designer) and the business client.
- They are used for identifying knowledge (cognitive learning, e.g., background learning in a disease state) or skills (psychomotor learning e.g., presenting, handling sales concerns) in GCO Training.

Creating Learner-Centered Learning Objectives Using the Mager Model

One popular model for learning objectives is the Robert Mager Three Part Performance Behavior Model. Learning objectives written using this model require three components:

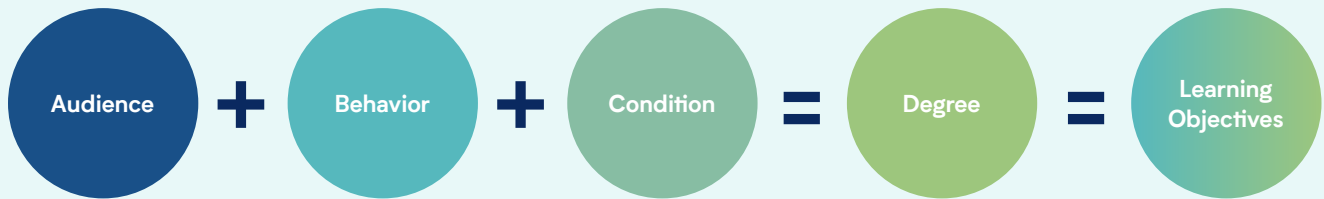


Condition Statement	Action Statement	Performance Criterion Statement
Under what conditions will the action (performance) occur?	What action (performance) will the learner be expected to do?	What level of competence should be accomplished?

Example: Given a customer interested in buying a car, the salesperson should be able to close the sale 75 percent of the time. Example: Given a customer interested in buying a car, the salesperson should be able to close the sale 75 percent of the time.

Creating Learner-Centered Learning Objectives Using the ABCD Model

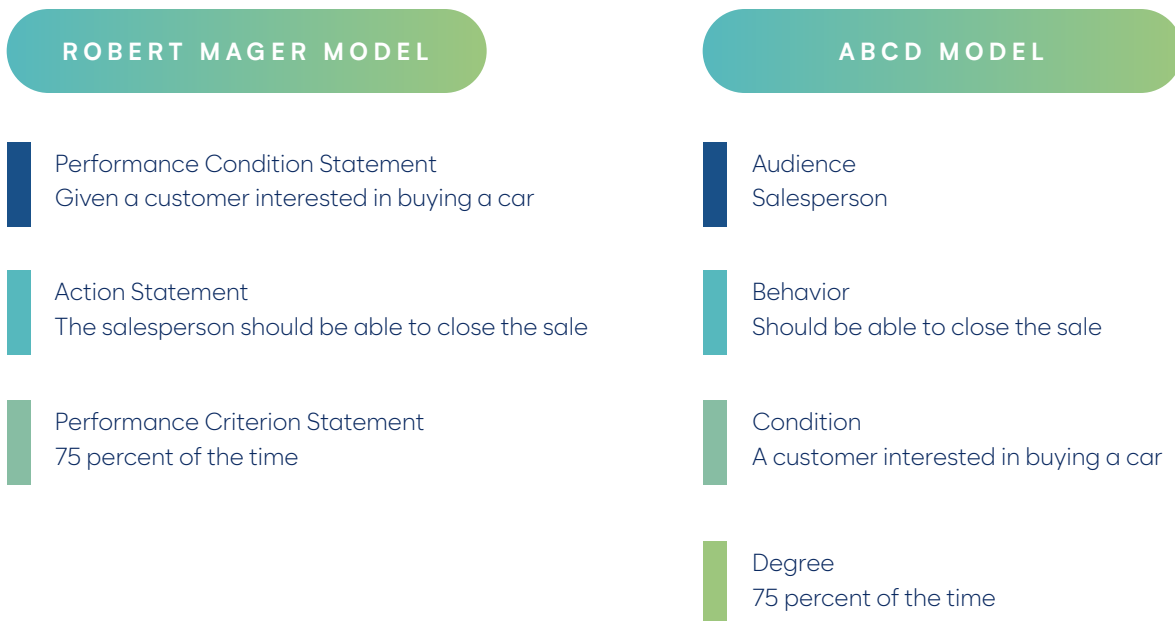
Another popular model for learning objectives is the ABCD Model. It has four parts: Audience, Behavior (Performance), Condition and Degree (Criteria). Learning objectives written using this model require four components:



Audience	Behavior	Condition	Degree
Who is the learner?	What action (behavior) will the learner be expected to do?	Under what conditions will the action (performance) occur?	What level of competence should be accomplished?

Example: Given a customer interested in buying a car, the salesperson should be able to close the sale 75 percent of the time.

Side-by-side, both of these models produce very similar learner-centered learning objectives.



Often our learning objectives are simplified to use just the audience and behavior components assuming that the conditions and degree (criteria) are understood.

Ensuring Action Oriented Learning Objectives

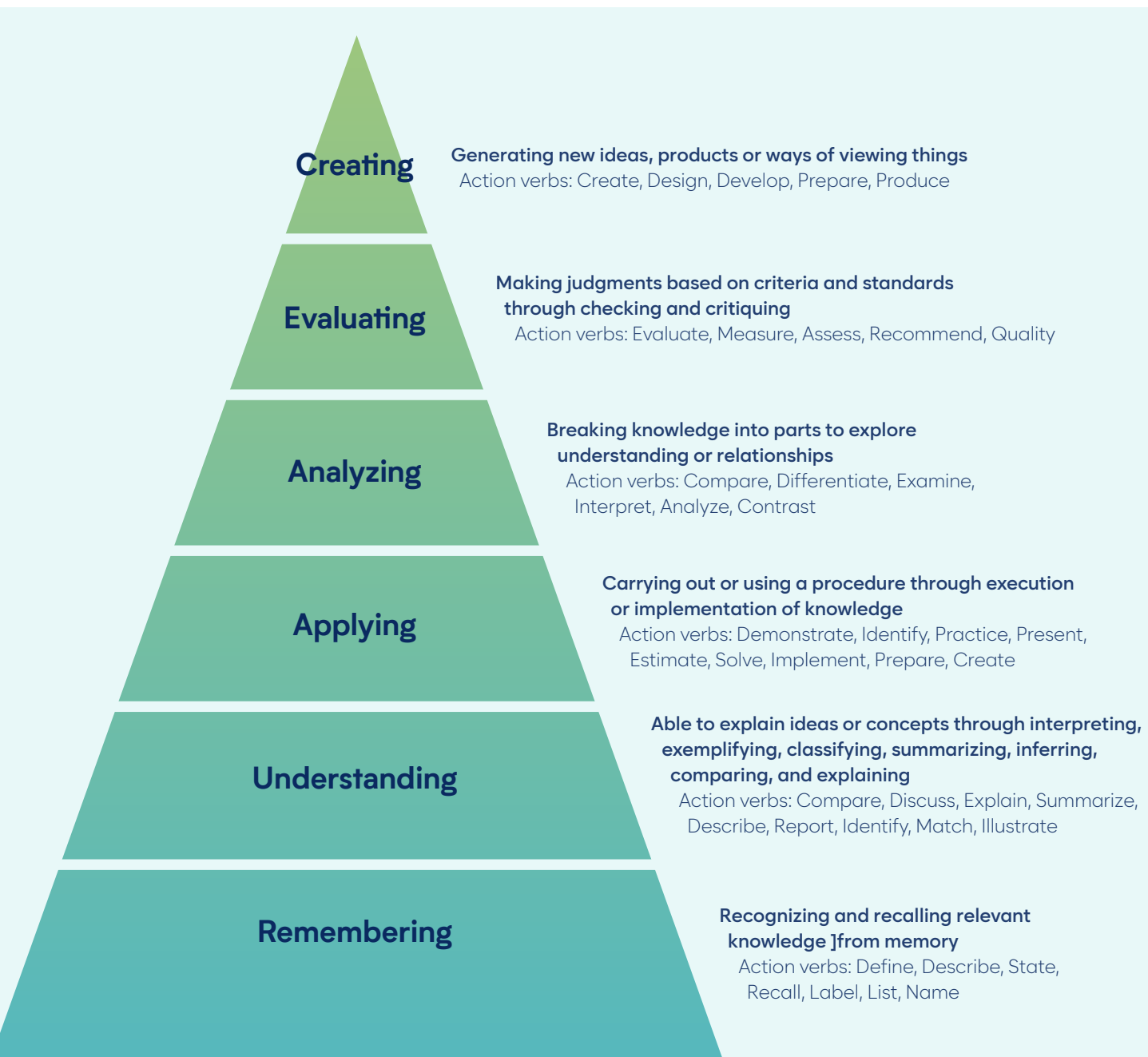
Selecting the best action verb for your learning objective is important. A useful tool for making this selection is Bloom's Taxonomy, originally conceived by Benjamin Bloom in 1956, and updated in 1991 by Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl.

The taxonomy classifies levels of learning into the following categories: remembering, understanding,

applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

Once you determine the appropriate category your learning objective falls into, you can select the action verb that most closely represents the desired outcome. This is an important point since you want the action verb in your objective to fit the measurement strategy you are deploying.

The graphic provides definitions of each category and common action verbs.



In Practice

Once you have the opportunity to practice creating learning objectives, it becomes easy to recognize when they have been constructed properly. Eventually, using either the Mager Model or the ABCD Model will become second nature.

Below are examples of objectives that conform to the Mager Model. Keep in mind that the degree or criteria is sometimes implied.

- Given a list of competitors, the sales representative will be able to identify the names of the four major competitors with 100% accuracy.
- Given an oral description of the events involved in an accident, the police officer will be able to correctly complete a standard accident report.

Mager Model Practice

When learning to write Mager Model objectives, use the following worksheet to map your components.

Component	Example
Performance Condition Statement	Given an elearning module...
Action Statement	...the pharmaceutical sales representative will be able to explain the functions of the gastrointestinal system...
Performance Criterion Statement	...scoring a minimum of 80% on the final exam.

Upon completion of an eLearning course, Sales Representatives will be able to explain the functions of the gastrointestinal system.

Below are examples of objectives that conform to the ABCD model. Keep in mind that the degree or criteria is sometimes implied.

- Upon completion of the VCT session, the participants will be able to summarize the key product features based on the summary of product characteristics.
- Upon completion of the eLearning course, the learner will be able to label all of the parts of the heart.

ABCD Model Practice

When learning to write ABCD Model objectives, use the following worksheet to map your components.

Component	Example
A=Audience Who is your learner?	Pharmaceutical sales representative
B = Behavior What will they do?	...will be able to explain the functions of the gastrointestinal system
C = Condition What conditions prevail?	...upon completion of an eLearning module
D=Degree How will the learner be measured?	...scoring a minimum of 80% on the final exam (sometimes implied)

After writing objective, ask the following questions:

- Are my words precise, clearly worded and specific to the learner?
- Is the objective observable and measureable?
- Do I clearly understand the learning task the learner needs to be able to do or know?
- Does the action verb in the objective fit the measurement strategy?
- How well is the learner expected to perform?

Use the two pages that follow as a worksheet for practicing the writing of learning objectives.

Mager Model Learning Objectives Worksheet

Component	You Try It
Performance Condition Statement	
Action Statement	
Performance Criterion Statement	

Component	You Try It
Performance Condition Statement	
Action Statement	
Performance Criterion Statement	

Component	You Try It
Performance Condition Statement	
Action Statement	
Performance Criterion Statement	

Mager Model Learning Objectives Worksheet

Component	You Try It
A=Audience Who is your learner?	
B = Behavior What will they do?	
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