

# Best Practice Recommendations for Writing **SMART** Learning Objectives

## **S**pecific

- Include to who the objective refers, and what type of activity involved
  - “As a result of participating in this live activity (simulated session, online learning, educational series, etc), the participant will be able to”
- Use only one action verb and one behavior per objective (see Resources for a list of potential verbs)
  - “identify three non-opioid medications that target pain management.”
- Avoid verbs that are difficult to measure, such as understand, appreciate, recognize, or know
- The greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.

## **M**easurable

- Quantify the desirable change expected
  - Cannot determine whether objectives have been met unless they can be measured
  - “As a result of participating in this live activity, the participant will be able to identify three non-opioid medications that target pain management.”

## **A**chievable

- Objectives should be attainable within a given time frame and with available program resources

## **R**ealistic

- Accurately address the scope of the problem and programmatic steps that can be implemented within a specific time frame
- Relate objectives to goal of the educational session

## **T**ime-phased

- Provide a time frame indicating when the objective will be measured, or a time by which the objective will be met
- Including a time frame in the objectives helps in planning and evaluating the program

**The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education distinguishes three areas of desirable change: competence, performance, and patient outcome.**

### **Competence Objectives**

**Competence is knowledge put into action by the learner (what would/should be done if needed).**

As a result of participating in this live activity, the participant will be able to:

- List major and minor risk factors predisposing patients to ...
- List risk factors for disease severity and death associated with (disease)
- Identify clinical, laboratory and imaging studies that indicate severity of disease
- Identify patient characteristics and co-morbid conditions that predict outcome in
- Describe evidence-based therapies for the treatment of ...
- Describe the use of biomarkers in the diagnosis of ...
- Describe factors that may require early aggressive interventions in ...
- Describe the variable clinical presentations of ...
- Explain indications for hospitalization of patients with ...
- Explain mechanisms of action and risks associated with (a class of drug)
- Explain patient characteristics that portend poor prognosis in ...

*Adapted from: "Core Competencies in Hospital Medicine" J Hosp Med 2006 Feb. 1(Suppl. 1):2-95. Available at: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/112396185/issue> Accessed 8 June 2009.*

### **Performance Objectives**

**Performance implies competence put into action (what is actually done).**

As a result of participating in this live activity, the participant will be able to:

- Distinguish \_\_\_ from \_\_\_ ...
- Distinguish the causes of ...
- Accurately apply staging criteria according to AJCC Cancer Staging Manual, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.
- Formulate appropriate cancer staging workup and treatment plan according to stage
- decrease the number of inappropriate prescriptions written for (drug) for (condition or disease)

### **Patient Outcome Objectives**

Patient Outcome is the consequence of performance. **These objectives are often associated with quality indicators, such as National Patient Safety Goals, Joint Commission/CMS indicators, Department of Public Health requirements; or with a hospital's internal quality goals.**

Wording should reflect the direction of desired movement.

As a result of participating in this live activity, the participant will be able to:

- Eliminate ...
- Increase level of ...
- Decrease ...
- Reduce incidence of ...

# SAMPLE VERBS FOR WRITING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This table will assist you in writing high level learning objectives. We encourage higher thinking order objectives; as the levels go up, so does the level of cognitive demand. Please choose strategies that encourage this higher level of thinking (*Application, Analysis, Synthesis, or Evaluation*), and limit your use of *Knowledge* or *Comprehension* objectives to no more than 1 per session.

	Cognitive Level	Action Verbs					Teaching Strategies	Assessment Strategies
No more than 1 learning objective should include a verb from these groups	<b>Knowledge</b> Learners will <b>know</b> something new	Arrange	Identify	Memorize	Recognize	Reproduce	Lecture Video Audio	Written Exams Oral Exams Pre and Post Test Group Polling Questions
	<b>Comprehension</b> Learners will be able to <b>convey</b> their new knowledge	Classify	Distinguish	Generalize	Infer	Review	Question Discussion Writing Learner presentations	Written Exams Oral Exams Pre and Post Test Learner presentations Writing critique
Write remaining learning objectives with verbs from these groups	<b>Application</b> Learners will be able to <b>apply</b> their new knowledge or skills in new situations	Apply	Discover	Manipulate	Prepare	Sketch	Learner presentations Problems Role Play Exercises Demonstration	Presentation Critique Assessment of: Problems Exercises Simulations
	<b>Analysis</b> Learners will be able to <b>analyze and interpret</b> new data	Analyze	Compare	Discriminate	Illustrate	Relate	Problems Exercises Case Studies Critical Incident Analysis Discussion	Root Cause Analysis Assessment of: Problems Exercises Case Studies Critical Incident Analysis
	<b>Synthesis</b> Learners will be able to <b>create something new</b> from their new knowledge or skills	Arrange	Compose	Explain	Reconstruct	Summarize	Problems Exercises Case Studies Group Activity/Project	Assessment of: Problems Exercises Case Studies Group Activity/Project
	<b>Evaluation</b> Learners will be able to <b>evaluate situations or concepts</b> based on their new knowledge or skills	Appraise	Compare	Discriminate	Justify	Select	Case Studies Exercises Critiques Simulations Appraisals	Assessment of: Case Studies Exercises Critiques Simulations Appraisals

LOWER ORDER

HIGHER ORDER

