

# WRITING INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

## The What, Why, How and When?

### What?

**An instructional objective:** is a statement that will describe what the learner will be able to do after completing the instruction (course). (Kibler, Kegla, Barker, Miles - 1974).

### Why?

1. Provides a focus that enables instructors and students to work toward a common goal.
2. Provides a means of measuring whether the students have succeeded in acquiring skills and knowledge.
3. Allows opportunity for self-evaluation.

### How?

1. Instructional objectives need to be **realistic, measurable** and **learner centered**.
  - a. Realistic objectives can be achieved within your time frame and in your given environment.
  - b. Measurable objectives enable you to know how well learners have acquired skills and knowledge.
  - c. Learner centered objectives state what the learner can do at the end of training. They always start with action verbs.
2. When writing objectives, do not use verbs that cannot be measured such as know, understand, and learn.

### When?

1. Before a course is developed (by designer).
2. Before a course is taught (by instructor).
3. Objectives should be reviewed with students at the beginning of the course/module.

## Elements of an Instructional Objective

### **The A, B, C, D's**

Objectives classically have several components:

#### **A. Audience**

For whom the objective is attended.

NOTE: They are not written for the instructor, but for students.

#### **B. Behavior**

Are the specific observable actions/behaviors that the learner is to perform or exhibit.

#### **C. Conditions**

Relevant factors affecting the actual performance (the givens), example:

1. Given a case study, diagram, clinical problem....
2. After a lecture or demonstration....

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3. After completing the reading....
4. After attending this workshop....
5. After attending this Best Practice Session....

## **D. Degree**

The level of achievement indicating acceptable performance (the competence), example:

1. To a degree of accuracy, example 90%.
2. To a stated proportion, example 3 out of 5 or a minimum of 3.
3. Within a given period of time.
4. According to the information given in the text, lab manual, lecture.
5. In compliance with criteria presented by the instructor.
6. In accordance with recommendations of some external organization or authority.

Objectives can be classified into domains of learning:

1. Cognitive: Knowledge
2. Psychomotor: Skills
3. Affective: Attitude or feelings

These domains of learning are further broken down into component parts and examples of this breakdown are provided according to Bloom, Simpson and Krathwohl.

Each domain can be taken from the knowledge level through to the application level, and finally to the problem-solving level; and which verbs can be used to describe the transition from knowledge level through to application and problem-solving levels.

The following examples are taken from materials developed by the Centre for Learning Resources, College of Allied Health Professions, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40536-0218. Principal developer: Elizabeth O. Daniell.

## **Cognitive - Knowledge Level**

**Goal:** The student will be able to establish a plan for physical therapy services.

**Instructional Objective:** Upon completion of a lecture, the student will be able to list at least four areas of planning for physical therapy services.

**Goal:** The student will be able to comprehend the controlling and influencing factors which affect radiographic qualities.

**Instructional Objective:** After completion of the assigned reading, the student will be able to list at least five qualitative characteristics of a processed radiograph which determine its acceptability for diagnostic purposes.

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## **Cognitive - Application Level**

**Goal:** The student will be able to establish a plan for physical therapy services.

**Instructional Objective:** Given a description of the legal and organizational structure of a hypothetical hospital clinic, the student will be able to list physical therapy services which would be legal and realistic for that clinical setting.

**Goal:** The student will be able to comprehend the controlling and influencing factors which affect radiographic qualities.

**Instructional Objective:** Given a series of 10 processed periapical exposures, the student will determine the diagnostic quality of each according to the stated criteria of acceptability (90% accuracy must be achieved overall).

## **Cognitive - Problem-Solving Level**

**Goal:** The student will be able to establish a plan for physical therapy services.

**Instructional Objective:** Given the case of a spinal cord injury patient, the student will plan objectives for physical therapy services that are compatible with those of the institution; within the legal purview of physical therapy; realistic; prioritized; and adequately documented.

**Goal:** The student will be able to comprehend the controlling and influencing factors which affect radiographic qualities.

**Instructional Objective:** Given 10 processed periapical radiographs of unacceptable quality, the student will determine the procedural error responsible for the low quality and

### **Summary**

Remember, writing instructional objectives can be made easier by asking the question: What is the intended result of the instruction in terms of the learner? To be absolutely clear an objective should be stated in such a way that both the prospective learner and teacher ideally will be able to answer three (3) questions about their expectations:

- 1. What should the learner be able to do?**
- 2. Under what conditions?**
- 3. How well (example: speed, accuracy)?**

The first question is obligatory, the others are less important; the third may not always be practical to include.

**Remember** to use action verbs which are measurable. Do not use verbs that are open to many interpretations such as appreciate, have faith in, know, learn, understand, and believe.

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**Remember** not to confuse the learning objective, which is pupil oriented, with a teaching objective, which describe a process; your objective should describe a pupil outcome rather than what will be taught.

**Remember** to involve prospective students as much possible in formulating objectives to enhance their commitment to the program and to improve their level of competence and performance.