

A GUIDE TO WRITING OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS

WRITING LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS

Learning Outcome Statements are a requirement unique to ANCC. One of your main responsibilities will be to ensure content experts write Learning Outcome Statements correctly. Most content experts will recognize the principles behind writing learning outcomes because we currently write learning objectives in a very similar way.

There are four keys to writing learning outcomes statements.

1. Make them specific.
2. Use a behavioral/action verb.
3. Include a time by which the objective will be achieved.
4. Link them to the gap and desired outcome.

Action Verb **Specific** **Time Period** **Link to Gap and Desired Outcome**

...will implement one strategy within the next month to improve provider to patient communication during the informed consent process.

How Learning Outcome Statements Are Linked to Other Planning Elements

It is important that the Learning Outcome Statement be linked to other elements defined during the planning process. Fig. 2. depicts a model for continuous education for healthcare providers based on educational linkage. When educational linkage is established, each element determined during planning and development informs the next element in the process.

Learning Outcome Statements:

- Are based on Professional Practice Gaps; address identified educational needs (knowledge, skills, and/or practices)
- Use verbs that describe an action that can be observed or measured
- Determine the content and learner engagement strategies,
- Are observable and measurable by the identified evaluation method within the activity time frame
- Identify the metric used to determine success, or achievement in narrowing or closing the gap
- May be assessed over the short term or long term.

When writing the learning outcome statement, you must consider the identified problem that instigated the need for the education in the first place, the gap that defines the competency deficit that causes current practice to be less than best practice, and the content that bridges that gap. The learning outcome, like the learning objectives, is the improved competency you want learners to achieve as a result of participating in the program. The Learning Outcome Statement is a one sentence declaration of that achievement and *how the author will prove (measure) that the outcome has been achieved.*

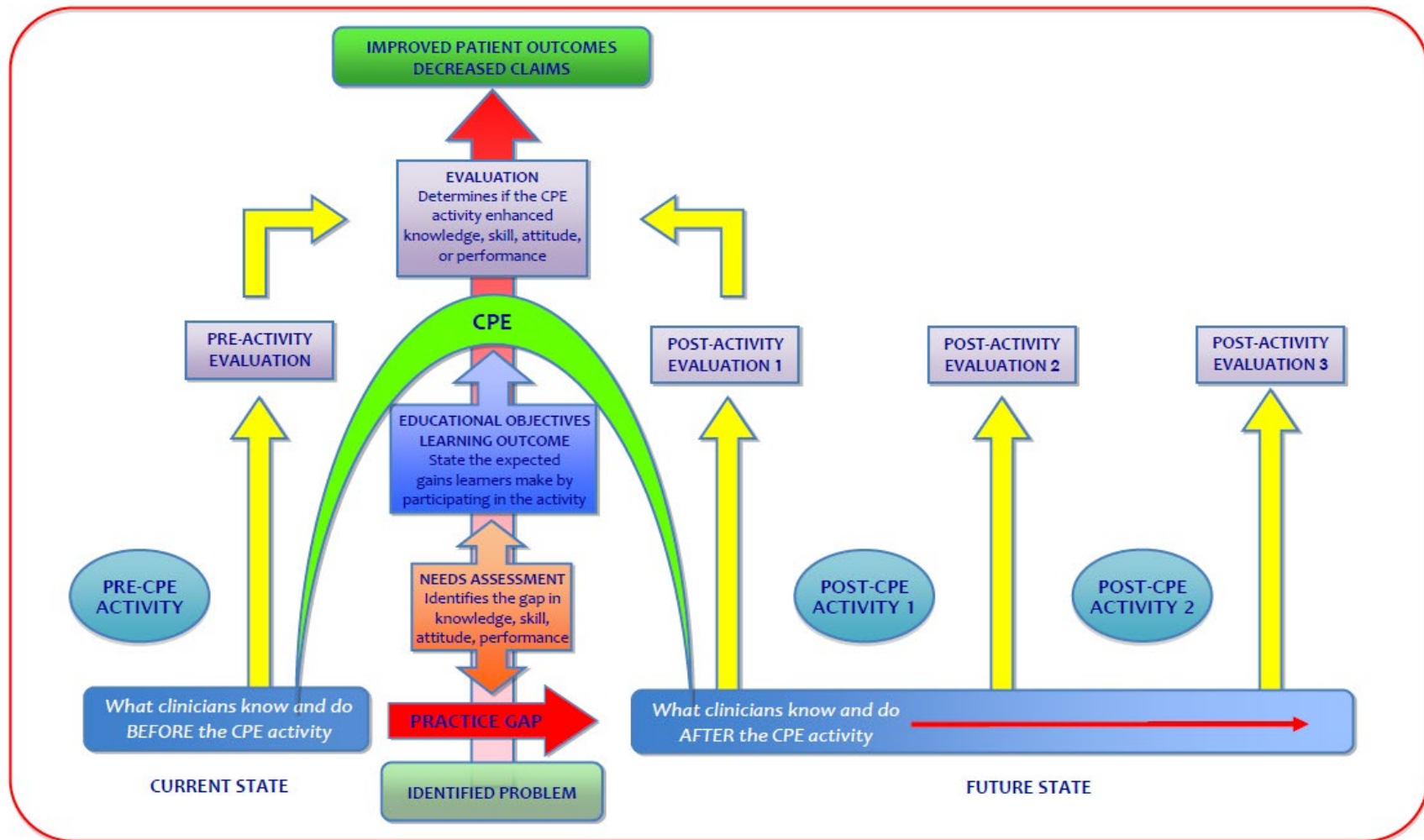


Principles of Writing Learning Outcome Statements

Principles	Tips
SMART Principles (1-5)	
a. The statement must be S pecific.	<u>Vague</u> : ...will lower risk of miscommunication. <u>Specific</u> : ... will lower risk of miscommunication between providers.
b. The statement must be M easurable immediately or once they have returned to their practice setting.	You must be able to test whether the outcome was achieved. For this reason, it is necessary to use measurable action verbs in the statement. Passive verbs (think, understand, comprehend, etc.) are not measurable. <u>Not measurable</u> : ...will lower risk of miscommunication between providers closed loop communication strategies. <u>Measurable</u> : ...will lower risk of miscommunication between providers by using at least one closed loop communication strategies.
c. The statement must be A ttainable.	Thoughtfully consider the learners' practice setting, patient demographics, scope of practice, and other factors that could impact achievement of learning outcomes. The outcome must be realistic and possible.
d. The statement must be R elevant to material or information presented.	Be sure the outcome reflects key actionable messaging provided in the content. This is critical to educational linkage.
e. The statement must be T imely.	Indicate by when the learner must demonstrate achievement of the learning outcome. <u>Not timely</u> : ...will lower risk of miscommunication between providers by using at least one closed loop communication strategies. <u>Timely</u> : ...will lower risk of miscommunication between providers by using at least one closed loop communication strategy within 30 days of completing this program.

Figure 2. Model for Educational Linkage in Continuous Professional Education for Healthcare Providers

MODEL FOR EDUCATIONAL LINKAGE IN CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR CLINICIANS



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Commitment to Change: Linking Learning Outcome Statements and Learning Objectives to Evaluations

One of the ways we determine the effectiveness of educational activities is to ask participants to tell us if they intend to make the improvements specified in learning objectives and learning outcome statements. To do this, we change your objectives and outcome statements into Commitment to Change Statements and place them as required fields in your evaluation.

As a result of participating in this educational activity, which of the following do you intend to do within the next three months?

Commitment to Change Behavior	Yes	No	I/we already do this.
<i>Perform the steps for effective Surgical Pause/Time Out process with each patient.</i>			
<i>Document informed consent discussions, including explanation of risk, benefits, and alternatives to treatment.</i>			
<i>Utilize AskMe3 practices to ensure each patient understanding of procedure risks.</i>			
Provide written patient education on pain management in the language of each patient.			

If you plan to conduct a post-activity survey to determine if your education was effective, you must write all your objectives like outcome statements –they must be measurable and indicate by when the behavior must be achieved.

Understanding the Difference Between Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Although ANCC is the only one of our accrediting entities that requires us to provide Learning Outcome Statements for any program that provides NCPD for Advanced Practice Clinicians and other nurses, all our accrediting entities require learning objectives. The way we write learning objectives is very similar to the way ANCC requires that we write learning outcome statements. Objectives are intended results or consequences of instruction, curricula, programs, or activities –the reasons the authors created the education. Learning outcomes are achieved results or consequences of what was learned, i.e., evidence that learning took place and the proof that the objectives were met. As discussed above, learning outcomes must be very specific, measurable, and occur within a specified timeframe.

Elements/Features	Learning Objectives	Learning Outcome Statements
Desired behavior (future state/best practice)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Concise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Realistic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Linked to content	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Within learners' scope of practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Criterion or standard for acceptable performance (measurement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
By when the behavior must be demonstrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Learning Objectives and Learning Outcome Statements have a lot in common. Both should include the desired behavior learners should be able to do as a result of learning, be concise (specific), be realistic (attainable), be linked to the content (relevant), and be within scope of practice. Learning outcome statements include two additional elements: clauses that reflect the criterion or standard for acceptable performance and an indication by when the behavior must be demonstrated.

More Examples of Learning Outcome Statements

- ✓ At least 90% of participants will demonstrate knowledge of XYZ by scoring 100% on the post-test.

- ✓ At least 80% of participants will self-report the use of the Ask Me 3 program when surveyed 60-days post-activity.
- ✓ 100% of participants will demonstrate the correct procedure to use the new XYZ pump during the seminar.
- ✓ At least 90% of learners will raise their hand to indicate that they learned at least one new communication strategy to use with families in end-of-life care.
- ✓ At least 75% of learners will have an increase in their knowledge related to documentation of care to reduce the risks of litigation as indicated by scoring 80% or higher on a post-test.
- ✓ Learners will demonstrate an increase in their knowledge related to best practices for infection prevention during linen processing by scoring 80% or above on a post-test.
- ✓ At least 80% of participants will identify at least one expected change or enhancement in their practice they intend to make in the next six weeks to reduce risks based on information learned in this education.

Writing Learning Outcome Statements that Reflect Learning Needs

A 'learning need' is the type of competence that must be improved to help the learner progress from current state to best practice (future state). Learning needs are identified when the needs assessment is conducted, and the gap is identified. Make sure the Learning Outcome Statement reflects the learning need. There are many different types of learning needs. Here are some examples:

- Knowledge
- Attitude/belief change
- Skill
- Problem-solving
- Decision-making
- Performance
- Confidence

Learning Outcome Statements are linked to learning needs and reflect various levels of attainment associated with Blooms Taxonomy. In the same way we write learning objectives, learning outcomes must be written using verbs associated with actions that can be measured. (Fig. 3.).

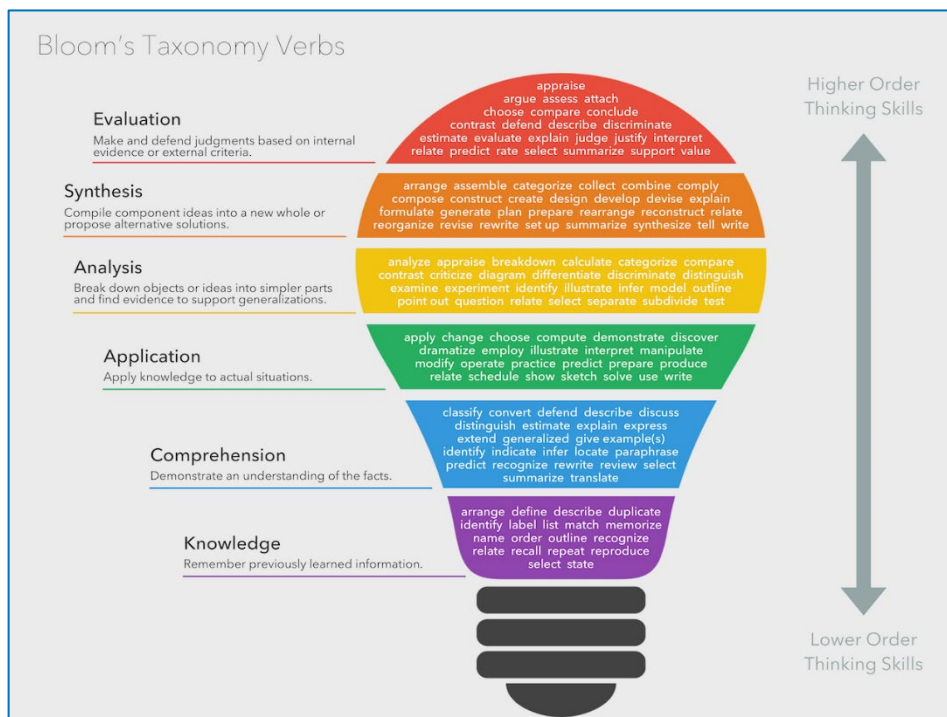


Figure 3. Bloom's Taxonomy and Action Verbs (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives: Statements that communicate the *intent* of an educational activity. They define the expected goal(s) of an educational activity. Objectives are used to organize specific topics or individual learning activities to achieve an overall learning outcome.

Every Education activity must have at least two learning objectives.

The number of objectives reflects the amount and diversity of information obtained from the needs assessment.

Learning Objectives must relate to the learning needs (KNOW, SHOW, or DO) identified by the planning committee.

The needs may include the development knowledge (top 5 risks for Surgery), skills (show correct technique for time out/surgical pause) or integration into practice (do apply a surgical pause that includes the OR team and patients).

Before writing objectives, it may be helpful to ask a few questions:

Ask the Planning Committee	What course of action or outcome or change is indicated by the needs assessment?
Ask the Faculty	What information can you share to enhance the intended audience's understanding and competency?
Ask the Audience	What would you like to take away from this presentation? What do you need that will enhance your practice?

Start your objective with an action verb that specifies what behavior or outcome the learner should have gained after completing this activity. The following list reflects the action verbs typically associated with the development of learning objectives (Rosof, CME *Primer*)

To formulate educational objectives that:

A. Communicate **INFORMATION** choose:

- Count
- Define
- Identify
- List
- Recognize
- Relate
- Select
- Tabulate

B. Communicate **COMPREHENSION** choose:

- Classify
- Compare
- Describe
- Estimate
- Explain
- Locate
- Restate

C. Communicate **APPLICATION** choose:

- Apply
- Complete
- Develop
- Examine
- Interpret
- Order
- Predict
- Restate
- Treat

D. Communicate **ANALYSIS** choose:

- Appraise
- Contrast
- Criticize
- Debate
- Differentiate
- Question
- Separate
- Summarize

E. Communicate **SYNTHESIS** choose:

- Arrange
- Assemble
- Detect
- Formulate
- Generalize
- Integrate
- Specify
- Validate

F. Communicate **EVALUATION** choose:

- Assess
- Critique
- Estimate
- Judge
- Rank
- Rate
- Recommend

G. **IMPART SKILLS** choose:

- Demonstrate
- Diagram
- Hold
- Measure
- Palpate
- Write

H. **CONVEYS ATTITUDES** choose:

- Consider
- Exemplify
- Reflect

Most learning objectives are introduced by stating: “Upon completion of this (lecture, workshop, session, etc.) the participants will be able to”:

Learner Objective Examples:

Upon the completion of this lecture the participants will be able to:

- *Describe the top five causes of surgical claims.*
- *Provide an example of the effect of psychological safety on an OR team.*
- *Demonstrate the steps & sequencing of the steps for an effective Surgical Pause/Time Out.*
- *Implement one strategy to improve documentation.*
- *Utilize AskMe3 practices to ensure patient understanding of procedure risks.*