

Writing SMART Objectives: Action Verbs

SMART Objectives are Specific: What exactly are we going to do for whom?¹

The “specific” part of an objective tells us what will change for whom in concrete terms. It identifies the population or setting, and specific actions that will result. In some cases it is appropriate to indicate how the change will be implemented (e.g., through training). Coordinate, partner, support, facilitate, and enhance are not good verbs to use in objectives because they are vague and difficult to measure. On the other hand, verbs such as provide, train, publish, increase, decrease, schedule, or purchase indicate clearly what will be done.

Additional Tips²

- Objectives should provide the “who” and “what” of program activities.
- Use only one action verb since objectives with more than one verb imply that more than one activity or behavior is being measured.
- **Avoid verbs that may have vague meanings to describe intended outcomes (e.g., “understand” or “know”) since it may prove difficult to measure them. Instead, use verbs that document action (e.g., “At the end of the session, the students will list three concerns...”)**
- **Remember, the greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.**

List of Verb Terms³

Less precise verbs Open to many interpretations - avoid using these terms	More precise verbs Open to few interpretations try to select these or similar terms	
	Intellectual level	Feeling level
know	discuss	challenges
realize	evaluate	defends
fully realize	identify	disputes
enjoy	list	joins
believe	diagram	judges
understand	compare and contrast	offers
really understand	translate	praises
feel responsible for	recall and state	questions
appreciate	integrate	shares
fully appreciate	illustrate	attempts
value	select	visits
comprehend	interpret	accepts
be aware of	differentiate	supports

Less precise verbs Open to many interpretations - avoid using these terms	More precise verbs Open to few interpretations try to select these or similar terms	
	Intellectual level	Feeling level
tolerate	summarize	
be familiar with	classify	
desire	predict	
feel	apply	
have faith in	write	
grasp the significance of	recite	
acknowledge	solve	
know	construct	
be motivated	complete	
experience	prepare	
be informed of	make	
be involved in	run	
	draft	
	draw	
	contract	
	develop	
	open	
	define	
	describe	
	tabulate	
	answer	
	report	
	state	

Source:

http://familymedicine.medschool.ucsf.edu/fhop/docs/word/local_MCAH_SOW/writing_SMART_objectives.doc

¹ From CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, "Evaluation Guide: Writing SMART Objectives", available at http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/nhdsp_program/evaluation_guides/smart_objectives.htm, accessed January 7, 2011

² From CDC, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Evaluation Briefs, "Writing Smart Objectives" No. 3b, January 2009, available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/evaluation/resources.htm>, accessed January 7, 2011

³ From Timmreck, 1995, *Planning, program development, and evaluation: a handbook for health promotion, aging, and health services* Chapter 4 "Writing Goals and Objectives" pg 73

Additional Action Verbs

Create	Choose	Match	Indicate	Explain	Categorize
Demonstrate	Present	Perform	Collect	Revise	Name
Document	Conduct	Provide			

EXAMPLES

Vague Objective	More measurable objective
<u>Understand</u> the benefits, efficacy, and safety issues associated with childhood vaccines	Participants will be able to <u>list</u> the benefits, efficacy, and safety issues associated with childhood vaccines.
<u>Be able to place</u> the new vaccine recommendations available into the overall healthy/immunizations well-being of students	<u>Identify and implement</u> newest vaccine recommendations for students
<u>Recognize</u> what parents bring to parenting	Participants will be able to <u>identify 5 traits</u> of healthy parent/child relationships
Participants will <u>understand</u> the characteristics used to diagnose attachment disorder	Participants will be able to <u>define</u> characteristics used to diagnose attachment disorder.
Participants will <u>understand</u> the differences in developmental guidelines for children	Participants will be able to <u>verbalize 3 differences</u> in developmental guidelines for children.
Participants will <u>know</u> the evaluation process for using the 12 dose regimen for treatment of LTBI	Participants will <u>discuss</u> the evaluation process for using the 12 dose regimen for treatment of LTBI (“discuss” is more measurable than “know”---but even more measurable: Participants will <u>list the steps</u> of the evaluation process.....

Additional Examples of **MEASURABLE** objectives:

List two changes in the released 2012 Control of Tuberculosis, Rules and Regulations	Describe three new resources related to prevention and control of TB
State three reasons why the treatment of tobacco use is an essential component of healthcare at all levels.	Participants will be able to explain the importance and benefits of Immunization Registries (I-CARE)
Identify 3 pre-term birth prevention strategies	Participants will be able to complete required documentation for immigrants with TB conditions
Identify and describe treatment obstacles and strategies in a cohort of TB patients with diabetes mellitus	Remember to use ACTION VERBS