

Verb Power for Writing Objectives

The following suggestions are helpful hints on using active verbs when writing program objectives.

Writing program objectives: Where do you start?

Program objectives should describe realistic and achievable outcomes in simple language. Even if a learning objective that is important to you seems difficult to measure, try to word the objective into language that focuses on clientele behavior.

Program objectives should be accepted and supported by your CEC, Program Council, and District Director. Developing appropriate and useful objectives is an iterative process; it's not unusual to go back a number of times to refine objectives. In most cases, it is only when you try to develop assessment techniques for program objectives that the need for refining those objectives becomes apparent.

Verb Power

Concrete verbs such as "define," "argue," or "create" are more helpful for assessment than vague verbs such as "know," "understand," or passive verbs such as "be exposed to." Some examples of action words frequently used in objectives are included in this document.

Adapted from California State University, Bakersfield, PACT Outcomes Assessment Handbook (1999)

How to use this as a resource

The list of verbs will help you as you write your POW. When you formulate the objectives for your program plans determine the level or depth of knowledge you want the participants to achieve. The list of verbs can be used to help you clearly state your objective in a form which will guide the implementation and evaluation of the program. For example, if you want your 4-H'ers to be able to participate in the Communications Day, then one of your objectives might be "Students will design and present a demonstration following the guidelines from the workshop on How to Give A Demonstration." This objective represents the synthesis level of learning. You will find the verb "design" in the column under Synthesis. The list of verbs will assist you in identifying the level of knowledge gained or behavior changes anticipated. This is by no means the only list of verbs you can use. They are only ideas for more clearly stating some of your program objectives.



Action Verbs

The verbs are broken down into verb groups based on the level of the objective. Each column represents a higher level of cognitive learning. This list includes verbs appropriate for initial or intermediate outcomes.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
define	classify	apply	analyze	arrange	appraise
identify	describe	compute	appraise	assemble	assess
indicate	discuss	construct	calculate	collect	choose
know	explain	demonstrate	categorize	compose	compare
label	express	dramatize	compare	construct	contrast
list	identify	employ	contrast	create	decide
memorize	locate	use	criticize	design	estimate
name	paraphrase	illustrate	debate	formulate	evaluate
recall	recognize	interpret	determine	manage	grade
record	report	investigate	diagram	organize	judge
relate	restate	operate	differentiate	perform	measure
repeat	review	organize	distinguish	plan	rate
select	suggest	practice	examine	prepare	revise
underline	summarize	predict	experiment	produce	score
	tell	schedule	inspect	propose	select
	translate	shop	inventory	set-up	value
		sketch	question		

Material for this sheet adapted from:

http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based_assessment/ch2.php#DevelopingPG

Additional resources can be found at:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/543/02/>

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