

THE COLLEGE OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
OF CANADA



LE COLLÈGE DES  
MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE  
DU CANADA

# QUICK TIPS

## Writing Learning Objectives

For presenters and planning committee members  
of Mainpro+<sup>®</sup> certified programs and events

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A clear learning objective states what the learner will be able to do upon completion of a continuing professional development activity, in terms of behavioural change. A clear objective identifies the physician behaviour or desired outcome of the educational offering. These behaviours and/or outcomes have been identified through the needs assessment process.

### Step 1

Learning objectives begin with the phrase, “At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to ...”.

### Step 2

Describe the information, skills, behaviours, or perspectives that participants in the session will acquire through attendance and engagement. Use verbs that describe an action that can be observed and that is measurable within the period of the activity (see Action verbs for learning objectives<sup>1</sup>, below).

### Step 3

Conclude with the specifics of what the learner will be doing when demonstrating achievement or mastery of the objectives. Emphasize what the learner will be able to do because of participation in the activity.<sup>2</sup>

## Action verbs for learning objectives<sup>1</sup>

EMPHASIS	RELEVANT VERBS
Knowledge	Recall, identify, recognize, acquire, distinguish, state, define, name, list, label, reproduce, order
Comprehension	Translate, extrapolate, convert, interpret, transform, select, indicate, illustrate, represent, formulate, explain, classify, comprehend
Application	Apply, sequence, carry out, solve, prepare, operate, generalize, plan, repair, explain, predict, demonstrate, instruct, compute, use, perform, implement, employ, solve
Analysis	Analyze, estimate, compare, observe, detect, classify, discover, discriminate, explore, distinguish, catalogue, investigate, break down, order, determine, differentiate, dissect, contrast, examine, interpret
Synthesis	Write, plan, integrate, formulate, propose, specify, produce, organize, theorize, design, build, systematize, combine, summarize, restate, argue, discuss, derive, relate, generalize, conclude, produce
Evaluation	Evaluate, verify, assess, test, judge, rank, measure, appraise, select, check, judge, justify, evaluate, determine, support, defend, criticize, weigh, assess
Affective	Agree, avoid, support, participate, cooperate, praise, help, offer, join
Psychomotor	Adjust, repair, taste, bend, measure, perform, operate, use, move

Avoid using verbs that are difficult to measure objectively. The following verbs are difficult to assess, and should be used with caution:

- Learn
- Comprehend
- Understand
- Appreciate
- Familiarize
- Study

## Objectives review checklist

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- 1 Does the learning objective reflect the needs assessment results?
- 2 Is the learning objective measurable?
- 3 Does the learning objective target one specific aspect of the expected performance?
- 4 Does the learning objective use an effective action verb that targets the desired level of performance?
- 5 Is the learning objective learner-centred?
- 6 Do the learning objectives measure a range of educational outcomes?
- 7 Does the learning objective match instructional activities and assessments?
- 8 Does the learning objective specify appropriate conditions for performance?
- 9 Is the learning objective written in terms of observable, behavioural outcomes?

## Sample learning objectives

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- 1 At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to list three of the currently approved statin drugs.
- 2 At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to describe the physical attributes of a school-age child with undiagnosed diabetes.
- 3 At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to provide chronic disease management in a planned, proactive manner.



## References

1. Marshall University, Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine. How to Write a Clear Learning Objective – A Suggested Approach. <https://jcesom.marshall.edu/media/54756/learning-objective-writing.pdf>. Accessed 2018 Jan 8.
2. Anderson LW, Krathwohl DR, eds. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Complete Edition). New York, NY: Longman; 2001.