How to Write Clear Objectives

The Best Choice .... according to the experts
"Clear objectives can help the instructor design lessons that will be easier for the student to comprehend and the teacher to evaluate" (Jones,1997).

"A properly written objective tells you what specific knowledge, skill, or attitude is desired and what method of instruction and criteria for learner achievement are required" (Lohr, no date).

Rationale
Writing clear course objectives is important because:
- Objectives define what you will have the students do.
- Objectives provide a link between expectations, teaching and grading.

Basic Information
Questions you need to think about: Who are your students? Freshman? Senior? A mix of different prior knowledge and experience?   Is this course a general education course or a course required for the major?

The ABCD method

The ABCD method of writing objectives is an excellent starting point for writing objectives (Heinrich, et al., 1996):

Audience – who are your learners?
Behavior – what is expected?
Condition – under what circumstances or context will the behavior be performed?
Degree – how much will be accomplished, how well will the behavior need to be performed, and to what level?

Example 1 (Psychomotor): Given free-style swimming instruction, the students will be able to demonstrate free-style swimming for 50 meters without stopping, and within a 10 minute time span.

Audience	Students
Behavior	Demonstrate
Conditions	Given the free-style swimming instruction
Degree	Without stopping Within 10 minutes
Tie with Assessment: Assess the student achievement by having someone time the student and observe the student swimming.	

Example 2 (Cognitive): Given clear criteria of what research articles are, the students will use the Internet and a search engine to locate and select three research articles for a research paper.

Audience	Students
Behavior	Locate and select
Conditions	Given criteria of what research articles are Access to the Internet Using web search engines
Degree	Three excellent research articles
Tie with Assessment: Assess the student achievement by comparing the quality of the articles that the students selected with the given criteria of what excellent research articles are.	

Example 3(Affective): Given the opportunity to work in groups during several sessions of the class, the students will demonstrate an increase in positive attitude towards working in groups, as measured by an attitudinal survey given by the end of the class.

Audience	Students
Behavior	Demonstrate
Conditions	Given the opportunity to work in groups
Degree	Positive increase in attitude towards working in groups measured by the attitudinal survey.
Tie with Assessment: Assess the student attitude change by conducting an attitudinal survey to all the students before and afterwards. You can either choose to analyze the attitudinal change of individual student or of all the students depending on the course size and your needs.	

Action verbs for writing objectives

Most learning objectives are not quite so simple as those above. Therefore, you will want to consider a larger set of action verbs for writing objectives. You can find a set of verbs categorized according to Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive objectives (Bloom, 1956) as well as the description of the categories and examples.

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