



“What do I want students to be able to do?”

General Goals and Explicit Objectives

One of the most important questions to ask as you plan a class session, course, or project is to ask yourself: “*What do I want students to be able to do by the end of ...?*” [... today’s class, my course, this activity, our project, etc.]

Most of us answer this question using general verbs that are difficult to observe. For example:

“Students will understand key events in late 20th c. European history”

“Students will know the principle factors of soil formation”

“Students will learn proper grammar”

These goals are a great place to start because they tell students what they will learn. But phrasing your expectations only in general terms creates challenges for you and for students.

Course objectives are the best way to explicitly communicate what kind and quality of work you expect. Writing clear objectives also makes assessing students’ work easier. Documenting student achievement is easier if you first consider what you want students to do (behavior), to what extent (degree) and under what conditions. In the right column below are examples of verbs that involve specific actions, observable behaviors, and products.

I want students to be able to:

General Goals		Specific Objectives
Know	<i>How do you know??</i> 	Analyze
Learn		Solve
Understand		Compare
Appreciate		Critique
Value		Respect

Once you have a list of 4-6 primary objectives, you can use them to guide decisions about course content, activities, assignments, and grading.

One of the benefits of writing course-level goals and objectives is that they add consistency to courses taught by different instructors, while allowing different faculty to help students meet course expectations in different ways. Faculty can use different examples or customize other aspects of the course for a particular student population, while maintaining the same high expectations for students.

Knowledge Domain Action Verbs

Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Acquire	Arrange	Apply	Analyze	Appraise	Alter
Attend	Categorize	Calculate	Appraise	Argue	Calculate
Choose	Chart	Change	Breakdown	Assess	Categorize
Collect	Cite	Choose	Categorize	Compare	Change
Complete	Classify	Classify	Classify	Conclude	Classify
Copy	Compile	Compute	Combine	Consider	Combine
Define	Conduct	Conduct	Compare	Contrast	Compile
Describe	Convert	Construct	Conclude	Critique	Compose
Detect	Demonstrate	Demonstrate	Contrast	Decide	Conduct
Differentiate	Determine	Develop	Criticize	Defend	Constitute
Distinguish	Diagram	Discover	Deduce	Discriminate	Construct
Duplicate	Differentiate	Employ	Defend	Explain	Create
Find	Distinguish	Generalize	Detect	Interpret	Deduce
Identify	Document	Manipulate	Diagram	Judge	Derive
Imitate	Draw	Modify	Differentiate	Justify	Design
Indicate	Edit	Operate	Discriminate	Recommend	Devise
Isolate	Estimate	Organize	Distinguish	Relate	Develop
Label	Explain	Predict	Evaluate	Standardize	Discover
List	Extend	Prepare	Formulate	Summarize	Discuss
Mark	Extrapolate	Produce	Generate	Validate	Document
Match	Fill in	Relate	Identify		Expand
Name	Follow	Restructure	Illustrate		Explain
Order	Formulate	Show	Induce		Formulate
Outline	Gather	Solve	Infer		Generalize
Place	Generalize	Transfer	Outline		Generate
Recall	Give an example	Use	Paraphrase		Modify
Recognize	Illustrate		Plan		Organize
Reproduce	Infer		Point out		Originate
Select	Interpolate		Present		Paraphrase
State	Interpret		Question		Plan
Underline	Itemize		Recognize		Predict
	Locate		Relate		Produce
	Make		Save		Propose
	Organize		Select		Rearrange
	Paraphrase		Separate		Reconstruct
	Predict		Shorten		Relate
	Prepare		Structure		Reorganize
	Quote		Subdivide		Revise
	Read				Rewrite
	Rearrange				Signify
	Record				Simplify
	Relate				Specify
	Rephrase				Summarize
	Represent				Synthesize
	Restate				
	Summarize				
	Translate				
	Update				

Attitudinal Domain

Receive	Respond	Value	Organize	Characterize
Listen to	Reply	Attain	Organize	Believe
Perceive	Answer	Assume	Select	Practice
Be alert to	Follow along	Support	Judge	Continue to
Show tolerance of	Approve	Participate	Decide	Carry out
Obey	Continue		Identify with	

Skills Domain

Each objective under the skills domain can be assessed at different levels of mastery. For example:
Level 1: Imitation Level 2: Manipulation Level 3: Precision Level 4: Articulation Level 5: Naturalization

Assemble	Attach	Balance	Build	Bundle	Calibrate
Care for	Clean	Code	Collate	Collect	Conduct
Conserve	Construct	Control	Design	Diagram	Dictate
Direct	Dismantle	Document	Draw	Duplicate	Edit
Execute	Fix	Format	Gather	Grade	Grid
Harvest	Highlight	Implement	Inspect	Instruct	Interview
Lift	Line	Load/reload	Locate	Log	Make
Manage	Measure	Mix	Mount	Operate	Organize
Package	Perform	Plant	Portion	Position	Prepare
Press	Process	Program	Proofread	Propagate	Prove
Provide	Prune	Raise	Recheck	Refill	Regulate
Renovate	Repair	Replace	Reproduce	Retrieve	Route
Save	Search	Secure	Select	Separate	Sharpen
Simplify	Simulate	Sketch	Sort	Splice	Stratify
Sterilize	Tape	Terminate	Transfer	Transplant	Treat
Trim	Troubleshoot	Verify	Wash	Write	