

Writing Learning Outcomes, ABCD

There are four elements to consider when writing any learning outcome:

Actor

Who will be doing the work? In higher education, this should be the students, and thus should describe what students will do. Examples: "Participants will" and "Students will."

Behavior

What should the students be able to do after receiving instruction? This part of the outcome consists of an action verb and a content reference. The desired behavior is the most important element of any outcome, and that behavior must be measurable, observable, and specific. Verbs like "comprehend," "know," and "understand," are not measurable and should be replaced by measurable verbs such as those found on the Action Verbs handout. Faculty might want students to "explain," "deconstruct," or "evaluate," all of which are measurable. "Compare and contrast" is measurable, but the term has been so overused that the instructor should be very specific about how the learner should compare the two items. Examples: "Identify cognitive strategies in your discipline," "Construct a database of American authors," or "Analyze the steps required for CPR."

Conditions

What prerequisites will be needed in order to complete the assignment (i.e. what tools will the students need?). Under what circumstances must the outcome be completed? Examples: "Using Bloom's Taxonomy..." or "Given the case study involving the patient with depression..."

and sometimes Degree

What is the minimum level of performance demanded of the student? The degree or level of performance should be connected to real world measures. Examples: "Identify one cognitive strategy," "with a score of at least 80%," or "within twenty minutes." Often student success will be measured only by the expert's subjective appraisal, in which case the degree would be, "to the instructor's satisfaction."

SOURCE: The ABCD model was first used by the Instructional Development Institute (c1971), sponsored by NSMI. It was first published in District of Columbia Public Schools, Dept. of Research and Evaluation (Aug. 1974), *An Evaluation of the Instructional Development Institute (I.D.I.) Program for the School Year 1973-74* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education), 62. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED099357.pdf> It has also appeared in multiple editions of Robert Heinich, Michael Molenda, & James D. Russell's, *Instructional Media, and the New Technologies of Instruction* (New York: Wiley, 1982). In this version, we have replaced "Audience" with "Actor."