**Writing Learning Objectives for CME Activities: Quick Tips and Examples**

Well-written learning objectives are measurable, specific, and focus on the learner. Learning objectives connect the identified educational need(s) to the desired outcome(s).

Learning objectives contain two major parts:

1. A noun – the content to be learned
   1. Examples: disease processes, new treatment guidelines, procedural skills
2. A verb – the process or skill to be learned
   1. Examples: define, recite, compare and contrast, demonstrate

The verb selected should be achievable based on the educational content presented. For example, expecting a learner to *list* the steps necessary to perform a thoracentesis is different than expecting the learner to *demonstrate* a thoracentesis. The educational method(s) used will help determine the achievability of the learning objectives. For example, a one-hour didactic lecture on thoracentesis would allow a learner to *list* the steps necessary to perform a thoracentesis. However, a 3 hour hands-on simulation activity would be more appropriate to allow a learner to *demonstrate* a thoracentesis.

Learning objectives should help CME activity planners evaluate whether the profession practice gap(s) was closed (i.e., did the activity help improve competence, physician performance, and/or patient outcomes).

Please click **here** to see a list of appropriate verbs for learning objectives. Verbs that should be avoided include appreciate, believe, have faith in, be familiar with, know, learn, and understand.

A useful method for writing learning objectives follows the Kern and Thomas Approach[[1]](#footnote-1). This approach facilitates the construction of a measurable learning objective that contain a “noun” and a “verb”. The learning objective is created using the following framework:

Who will do how much (how well) of what by when?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Who | Will do | How much (how well) | Of what | By when |
| The learner, provider, physician, participant, etc. | What do you want them to do?  VERB | How well should the action/behavior be done (if applicable) | What do you want them to learn?  NOUN | End of the lecture, course, series, year, etc. |

Example 1: Participants will be able to identify the latest updates to the ACLS algorithm by the end of this lecture.

Example 2: Learners will be able to demonstrate central venous catheter placement at a mastery level by the completion of the course.

Example 3: At the completion of this activity, physicians will

* propose 3 strategies for improving tobacco use screening in the outpatient setting
* discuss behavioral counseling techniques for the reluctant quitter
* describe an evidence based approach to tobacco cessation pharmacotherapy

1. Kern, D.E., Thomas, P.A. & Hughes, M.T. (Eds.). (2010) Curriculum development for medical education: a six-step approach. Johns Hopkins University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)