

WRITING EFFECTIVE LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS

When stating expected learning outcomes, it is important to use verbs that describe exactly what the learner(s) will be able to do upon completion of the course.

Examples of good action words to include in expected learning outcome statements:

Compile, identify, create, plan, revise, analyze, design, select, utilize, apply, demonstrate, prepare, use, compute, discuss, explain, predict, assess, compare, rate, critique, outline, or evaluate

There are some verbs that are unclear in the context of an expected learning outcome statement (e.g., *know, be aware of, appreciate, learn, understand, comprehend, become familiar with*). These words are often vague, have multiple interpretations, or are simply difficult to observe or measure (American Association of Law Libraries, 2005). As such, it is best to avoid using these terms when creating expected learning outcome statements.

For example, please look at the following learning outcomes statements:

- *The students will understand basic human development theory.*
- *The students will appreciate music from other cultures.*

Both of these learning outcomes are stated in a manner that will make them difficult to assess. Consider the following:

- How do you observe someone “understanding” a theory or “appreciating” other cultures?
- How easy will it be to measure “understanding” or “appreciation”?

These expected learning outcomes are more effectively stated the following way:

- *The students will be able to identify and describe the major theories of human development.*
- *The students will be able to identify the characteristics of music from other cultures.*