

Article #1: Writing Behavioral Objectives

Behavioral objectives, learning objectives, instructional objectives, and performance objectives are terms that refer to a description of observable student behavior or performance. An educational behavioral objective is a clear and unambiguous description of a planned educational expectation (s) for the learner that specifies what behavior a student must perform or demonstrate in order for a teacher to infer that learning took place. Behavioral objectives, if constructed properly, provide an ideal vehicle for making those inferences. Behavioral objectives are about curriculum, not instruction.

A behavioral objective, in addition to being the focal point of the learning plan, provides criteria for constructing an assessment of the learning experience, as well as for the instructional methodologies the educator utilizes to implement the experience. Without a behavioral objective, it is difficult, if not impossible to determine exactly what the outcomes of a particular learning experience is supposed to achieve.

When writing behavioral objectives, one should begin by defining a particular content or informational group. Individuals having knowledge of what constitutes appropriate content in a particular area should accomplish this. A well-constructed behavioral objective describes an intended learning outcome and contains three parts, the behavior verb, the condition, and the measurement criteria.

The Behavioral Verb

The student behavior component of the learning objective states the skill or knowledge to be gained and the action or skill the student is able to demonstrate an acquisition of. This component contains an action verb that relates to an observable behavior or the creation of an observable product. Inferences about student learning can be made on the basis of what a student does or produces. Examples of student behaviors in Surgical Technology include performing a surgical scrub, analyze wound closure materials, and demonstrate a positive surgical conscience.

The Conditions of Performance

The condition of performance defines under what circumstances or in what context will the behavior be performed. The conditions part of an objective usually begins with a simple declarative statement such as “upon request...” or “given...” Examples of conditions of performance include given the video on aseptic technique, or given a copy of the program’s scrubbing procedure.

The instruction that leads to the behavior is not, nor ever should be included in the actual objective. The condition of performance should concentrate only on describing the conditions under which the desired learner behavior is to be performed.

Performance Criteria

The performance criteria are a set of descriptions that describe how well the behavior must be performed to satisfy the intent of learning. It describes how well is the behavior done or a minimum acceptable response in relationship to a specific standard. Examples of performance criteria include without a break in aseptic technique and identifying four out of five components.

Examples of well-written behavioral objectives in Surgical Technology include:

- Using the information from the textbook *Surgical Technology for the Surgical Technologist*, the learner will identify seven types of absorbable suture material.
- Using the instruments in a Basic Abdominal Set, the learner will identify the eleven types of instruments to be placed on the Mayo stand for an open inguinal herniorrhaphy.

Reference

Kizlik, R. *How to write behavioral objectives* On-line:
<http://members.spree.com/teach2prime/objectives.htm>