

Action Verbs for Writing Outcomes

A Bloom's taxonomy guide for student learning outcomes and program outcomes

A good outcome names something a person can **see or measure**. The verb does most of that work. This guide groups action verbs by the six levels of the revised Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), from recalling information to creating something new.

Verbs by level

Level	What students do	Sample verbs
Remember	Recall facts, terms, and basic concepts	define, identify, label, list, name, recall, recognize, state
Understand	Explain ideas or concepts in their own words	classify, compare, describe, explain, interpret, paraphrase, summarize
Apply	Use information or methods in a new situation	calculate, carry out, demonstrate, implement, solve, use
Analyze	Break material into parts and see how they relate	categorize, differentiate, examine, distinguish, investigate, organize
Evaluate	Make and defend judgments using criteria	appraise, critique, defend, judge, justify, recommend, assess
Create	Put elements together into something new	compose, construct, design, develop, formulate, plan, produce

Verbs to avoid

These verbs describe things that happen inside a person's head. They're worthwhile goals, but you can't observe them directly, so they're hard to assess:

- know
- understand
- appreciate
- learn
- become aware of
- be familiar with
- gain an understanding of

If one of these captures what you mean, ask: **what would a student do that shows me they understand?** That action is your verb.

Before and after

Vague	Measurable
Students will understand research methods.	Students will design a study that answers a stated research question using an appropriate method.
Students will appreciate diverse perspectives.	Students will compare at least two cultural perspectives on a contemporary issue and explain how each shapes the argument.
Students will know how to write well.	Students will produce a written argument that states a clear thesis, supports it with evidence, and addresses counterarguments.

Verbs for program outcomes

Academic and student support services and administrative offices often assess **program outcomes (POs)**: results of a program's work that aren't about student learning. These usually use verbs that describe a change or a level of service:

- **increase** or **decrease** (participation, wait times, errors)
- **complete** or **process** (requests within a set time)
- **provide** or **deliver** (services that meet a stated standard)
- **maintain** or **improve** (satisfaction, accuracy, compliance)

Where a support program does aim at student learning, such as a workshop series, the Bloom's verbs above apply just as they do for academic SLOs.

Source: Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. Longman.

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