

The Skill Of Writing Objectives

Writing objectives is a learned art. A training objective clearly and simply states what the learner will be able to do as a result of participating in your training program. For the participant, a well-written objective answers the question *Why am I here?*

A poorly written objective might sound like this: *At the end of this program you'll know how to read a financial statement.*

A better-written objective would say: *At the end of this program you'll be able to read and interpret cash flow statements, looking for red flags that may signal a company is in trouble.*

The second statement *clearly* answers the question *Why am I here?*

Here are few tips for writing objectives well:

- Effective objectives are measurable and observable. They never begin with the word *to understand* or *to know*. How do I know that you *know* the alphabet? Because you can *recite* it.
Wrong: participants will know the alphabet
Right: participants will be able to recite the alphabet
- An objective states what a participant will be able to do or will know as a result of participating in the training program.
The example at the start of this article is a perfect example; Participants will be able to read and interpret cash flow statements (what they are able to do) looking for red flags that may signal a company is in trouble (what they will know).
- It is easier to write an objective when you complete the sentence, *Participants will be able to...*; you'll find you run into trouble if you stop at *Participants will...*

Consider these two examples:

Participants will know the difference between a cash flow statement and a profit and loss statement compared to

Participants will be able to describe the difference between a cash flow statement and a profit and loss statement

Notice that the second iteration leads you into stating a verb or action word (describe).

- And that is the final key to writing good objectives: objectives always start with a verb or action word. So consider - at the end of this training program participants will be able to:

Use
Demonstrate
Inspect
Complete
Sell

Explain
Diagram
List
Assemble
Analyze

Label
Evaluate
Prepare
Organize
Conduct

You will find you have an easier time designing and creating training programs when you have a clearly stated outcome of knowledge, skill, or behavior.