

Rules of Thumb and Common Errors

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Two Objectives in One

Do not combine two objectives into one, such as: *Participant will locate air filter and determine if it should be replaced.* What if your participant can locate the filter but cannot determine if it should be replaced? Did he pass the objective or fail it?

Knowing and Understanding

Avoid objectives that aim to improve an internal state of mind; for example - to “understand” or to “know” are not measurable or observable. In addition, since most learning in the workplace is to achieve a performance outcome, these two terms truly are inapplicable – there is almost always an action word that describes what your trainees will leave knowing or being able to do.

Too Narrow or Too Broad

You don't want your objectives to be so broad that three different instructors, given your objective, could effectively teach three different classes. For example: *Participants will be able to read financial statements.* Nor do you want your objectives to be so narrow they practically become the text of your training, such as: *Participants will be able to identify uses of cash and lines of credit used by corporations via cash flow statements.* Ideally, an appropriately stated objective would be: *Participants will read and interpret cash flow statements.*

Stating a Topic as an Objective

Many times a designer will state a topic, such as: *Participants will learn the principles of electricity,* rather than a learning objective, which might be stated: *Participants will be able to wire an electric engine.* In this case the principles of electricity would be inherent in learning how to wire an electric engine.

Teaching vs. Performance

Similar to stating a topic as an objective, many times objectives are erroneously stated in the form of what is being taught, rather than in the form of what the trainee will be able to do. *Reading financial statements* is what is being taught but *Identifying uses of cash and cash reserves* is what you want the trainee to be able to do as a result of your training.