Education & Learning / Curriculum Design

Create measurable, observable learning objectives using action verbs — outcome specification for effective curriculum design.
Difficulty: Intermediate
Model: GPT-4 / Claude / Gemini
Use Case: Course Design, Objective Writing
Updated: June 2026
Why This Prompt Exists
Vague learning objectives (“understand,” “know,” “learn about”) are not measurable. Without clear objectives, you can’t assess whether students have learned anything.

You get:

- objectives that can’t be measured (“understand” — how do you test that?)
- no alignment between teaching and assessment
- students unclear on what they’re supposed to learn
- inconsistent course outcomes across instructors
- difficulty evaluating program effectiveness

But effective learning objectives have structure:

- action verb: observable, measurable (not “understand”)
- content: what they’re learning about
- condition: under what circumstances (optional)
- criterion: how well they must perform (optional)
- Bloom’s level: cognitive demand appropriate to the goal

Without clear objectives, curriculum is directionless.
This prompt builds measurable learning objectives using action verbs.

The Prompt

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Assume the role of a curriculum designer who writes measurable
learning objectives.

Your task is to create clear, observable learning objectives using
action verbs.

Generate:

1. COURSE/UNIT INFORMATION
   - Course/unit title: [name]
   - Target audience: [grade level, prior knowledge]
   - Overall goal: [what students should ultimately be able to do]

2. BLOOM'S TAXONOMY ACTION VERBS

| Level | Verbs | Assessment Methods |
|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Remember | Define, list, recall, identify, name, state | Multiple
choice, matching, fill-in-blank |
| Understand | Explain, summarize, describe, interpret, paraphrase |
Short answer, discussion, concept map |
| Apply | Use, solve, demonstrate, calculate, execute | Problem set,
lab, simulation |
| Analyze | Compare, contrast, categorize, differentiate, diagram |
Essay, case study, analysis |
| Evaluate | Critique, justify, assess, recommend, debate | Rubric,
evaluation, recommendation |
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| Create | Design, construct, formulate, produce, invent | Project, portfolio, prototype |

3. LEARNING OBJECTIVE FORMULA

`By the end of this [course/unit/lesson], students will be able to [action verb] [content] [condition] [criterion].`

Example:
`By the end of this unit, students will be able to calculate the mean, median, and mode of a data set with 90% accuracy.`

4. OBJECTIVE SET (by Bloom's level)

Remember (foundational knowledge)
- Objective R1: [measurable objective]
- Objective R2: [measurable objective]

Understand (comprehension)
- Objective U1: [measurable objective]
- Objective U2: [measurable objective]

Apply (use in context)
- Objective A1: [measurable objective]
- Objective A2: [measurable objective]

Analyze (break down)
- Objective AN1: [measurable objective]
- Objective AN2: [measurable objective]

Evaluate (judge)
- Objective E1: [measurable objective]

Create (synthesize)
- Objective C1: [measurable objective]

5. OBJECTIVE ALIGNMENT MATRIX

Objective	Bloom's Level	Assessment Method	Success Criterion
[objective]	[level]	[how tested]	[what counts as passing]

6. COMMON OBJECTIVE MISTAKES

Mistake	Why It Fails	Correct Approach
"Understand X"	Not measurable	"Explain X in your own words"
"Learn about Y"	Too vague	"Identify and describe the three types of Y"
No success criterion	Can't determine mastery	"With 80% accuracy" or "without errors"
Too many objectives	Cognitive overload	3-7 per unit, 1-3 per lesson
All low-level (remember)	No depth	Include higher-level objectives

7. OBJECTIVE VERB CHEAT SHEET

| Avoid These | Use These Instead |

|-------------|-------------------|
Understand	Explain, summarize, describe, interpret
Know	Define, list, identify, recall, name
Learn about	Analyze, compare, evaluate, apply
Appreciate	Critique, assess, justify, defend
Become familiar with	Demonstrate, use, solve, calculate

INPUTS:

Course/unit title:
[PASTE TITLE]

Target audience:
[E.G., "9th grade biology", "Adult learners, no prior experience"]

Overall goal (what they should ultimately do):
[E.G., "Design and conduct an experiment using the scientific method"]

Bloom's level focus (optional):
[REMEMBER / UNDERSTAND / APPLY / ANALYZE / EVALUATE / CREATE / ALL]

Number of objectives needed:
[E.G., "5-7 per unit", "3 per lesson"]

RULES:
- Every objective must use an observable, measurable action verb (not "understand," "know," "learn")
- Include a success criterion when possible (accuracy, time, completeness)

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- Align objectives with assessment methods (don't test recall if objective is analysis)
- Distribute objectives across Bloom's levels (not all low-level)
- Write objectives for the student, not the instructor ("students will be able to" not "I will teach")
- Limit to 3-7 objectives per unit (more is overwhelming)
- Test objectives by asking: "Can I observe whether a student has achieved this?"
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How To Use It

- Every objective must use an observable, measurable action verb — never “understand,” “know,” or “learn about.”
- Include a success criterion when possible — “with 90% accuracy,” “in under 5 minutes,” “without errors.”
- Align objectives with assessment methods — don’t test recall if the objective is analysis.
- Distribute objectives across Bloom’s levels — not all low-level (remember) or all high-level (create).
- Write objectives for the student, not the instructor — “students will be able to” not “I will teach.”
- Limit to 3-7 objectives per unit — more than that is overwhelming for students and instructors.
- Test objectives by asking: “Can I observe whether a student has achieved this?”

Example Input

Course/unit title: “Introduction to Statistics”

Target audience: “College freshmen, no prior statistics experience”

Overall goal: “Students will be able to analyze a data set and draw valid statistical conclusions”

Bloom’s level focus: “ALL (remember through create)”

Number of objectives needed: “6 objectives for the full course”

Why It Works
Vague objectives like “understand” cannot be measured. Without measurable objectives, assessment is arbitrary.

This framework improves outcomes by forcing:

- action verb selection (Bloom’s taxonomy verbs, not vague ones)
- objective formula application (ABCC: Action, Behavior, Condition, Criterion)
- distribution across cognitive levels (not all low-level)
- alignment with assessment methods (teaching, testing, and objectives aligned)
- common mistake prevention (avoiding “understand,” “know,” “learn about”)

Failure modes this prevents:

- objectives that can’t be measured (“understand” — how do you test that?)
- no alignment between teaching and assessment
- students unclear on what they’re supposed to learn
- inconsistent course outcomes across instructors

This improves on: Vague, unmeasurable objectives. Action-verb objectives enable precise assessment.

Related to: CD-02 (Scope and Sequence) for ordering; CD-04 (Assessment Blueprint) for testing alignment.

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See also Assessment Blueprint