



AIA Triangle

Learning Objectives What are they and how do I write one?

What are the AIA/CES learning objective requirements?

AIA/CES requires that all providers submit learning objectives for each program they register. There is a minimum requirement of 3 learning objectives per hour for continuing education courses. **Please note:** If your course is HSW or Sustainable Design three-quarters of the content and instructional time of a course must be focused on acceptable HSW topics to enable the class to count as HSW credits.

Why does AIA/CES require learning objectives?

AIA/CES strives to maintain the highest standards of education, and as such, utilizes all tools available to consistently improve and train providers. Learning objectives are proven to be an extremely effective tool for assessing whether student outcomes are accomplished and whether a presenter has successfully taught the material.

What is a learning objective?

- A learning objective is an explicit statement that clearly expresses what the student will be able to do after taking a course. It is an observable and measurable student outcome statement.
- A learning objective identifies what behavior(s) a student must demonstrate in order for the instructor to know that the planned learning took place.
- Learning objectives also benefit students by helping them clarify their personal goals for a course and give them a framework against which to measure their own success.
- Learning objectives should be concise and concrete so they are open to limited interpretation. They may be used for both synchronous and asynchronous style courses.

A learning objective is made up of three parts

1. **BEHAVIOR:** Describes what participants will be able to do as a consequence of taking a course.
 - Example: calculate
2. **CONDITION:** Describes conditions under which the student will perform the behavior.
 - Example: using the sample course residential project
3. **CRITERIA:** Describes the criteria you will use to evaluate student performance.
 - Example: the total cost of materials

Combine the **BEHAVIOR**, **CONDITION**, and **CRITERIA** and you have an official learning objective.

- Example: Participants will be able to calculate the total cost of materials using the sample course residential project.

Writing a learning objective in 4 steps

STEP 1: What **BEHAVIOR** will the student be able to do after taking the course?

Describe what new information, skills, or behaviors participants will be able to do upon conclusion of your course. Behavior must be observable and/or measurable. Use the behavioral verbs listed below.

- Example: Participants will be able to define three high-end performance goals in terms of site, water, materials, energy, indoor environmental quality, mobility, or community.

STEP 2: Under what **CONDITION** will the behavior be performed?

Explain how the behavior will be performed. Think of circumstances, commands, materials and directions that the student will be given to perform the behavior.

- Example: Using an existing project

STEP 3: Against what **CRITERIA**?

How will you evaluate the behavior? How often, how well, how many, how much, etc.

- Example: Evaluate if the project is still viable as measured against the performance goals.

STEP 4: Now put it all together

Combine the three steps into one or two complete sentences and you're finished.

- Example: Participants will be able to define three high-end performance goals in terms of site, water, materials, energy, indoor environmental quality, mobility, or community, using an existing project, to evaluate if the project is still viable as measured against the performance goals.

Behavioral verbs to use when writing a learning objective

abstract, acquire, adjust, agree, analyze, apply, appraise, argue, assess, avoid, breakdown, build, calculate, carry out, catalog, clarify, classify, combine, compare, compute, conclude, construct, contrast, convert, cooperate, create, criticize, defend, define, demonstrate, derive, describe, design, detect, determine, differentiate, discover, discriminate, discuss, dissect, distinguish, employ, estimate, evaluate, examine, explain, explore, formulate, generalize, help, identify, illustrate, implement, indicate, inspect, instruct, integrate, interpret, investigate, join, judge, justify, label, list, master, measure, move, name, observe, offer, operate, order, organize, participate, perform, plan, praise, predict, prepare, produce, propose, rank, recall, recognize, relate, repair, represent, reproduce, research, restate, resolve, select, sequence, solve, specify, state, summarize, support, systematize, taste, test, theorize, transform, translate, use, utilize, verify, weigh, write, etc.

Behavioral verbs to avoid when writing a learning objective

Avoid using the following behavioral verbs when writing learning objectives because they are vague and difficult to measure. As mentioned previously, learning objectives must be observable and measurable.

appreciate, cover, realize, be aware of, familiarize, study, become acquainted with, gain knowledge of, understand, comprehend, know, learn

Sample learning objective

Participants will be able to identify the relationship between high-end goals and budget limitations, using a complete project to compare and create a new budget that incorporates high-end goals.