**Smart Objectives: Some common pitfalls:**

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| **Some pitfalls** | **…and how to avoid them** |
| **Trying to achieve too much in one session** | Plan the session carefully, and allow time for discussion, activities and reflection.  Be realistic what will be achievable within the timeframe and the ability of the learners |
| **Trying to cover too many learning outcomes** | Stick to a small number of learning outcomes (fewer than five) and be as specific as you can in terms of exactly what you are expecting the learners to be able to do at the end of the session  Your objectives should not be a list of the learning activities! |
| **Learning outcomes not linked to the programme or to learner needs (level, etc.)** | Make sure you know and understand the programme outcomes, the assessments the learners are working towards and the expectations of you by course organisers, particularly the outcomes and assessments that relate specifically to your session(s)  Include informal and formal activities that help you understand and identify the needs of the learners  You may need to change your session objectives as the course progresses to match the needs of the learners |
| **Learning outcomes defined at the wrong level (re Bloom)** | Think carefully about exactly what you are expecting the learners to be able to do, think about their ‘learning journey’: their prior learning and the stage they have reached.  Use the guide sheet to select appropriate verbs |
| **Learning outcomes in the wrong domain (re Bloom: cognitive, psychomotor, affective)** | Map the learning outcomes on to the domains, split objectives that cover more than one domain and design the teaching to enable learners to achieve all the outcomes. If you are assuming that learners have the underpinning knowledge or earlier practice to carry out a complex skill, check it out, or break the skill down into sub-objectives |
| **Learning outcomes not specific enough, don’t define exactly what you want them to be able to do** | Practise writing them and think about how you might assess the objective  It is better to be too specific rather than too vague |
| **Learning outcomes not linked to teaching and learning methods** | Select the teaching and learning methods that help learners achieve the outcome (level, domain), e.g. if skills, need demonstration, practice (simulation – real), possibly broken down into steps, build in feedback, not just reading about it or watching a video |
| **Learning outcomes not linked to assessment** | Always link the learning outcomes to an assessment (formative or summative), i.e. how will you and the learner know that they have achieved the outcome satisfactorily? Make sure the assessment assesses the right domain so that skills are assessed by practical clinical assessments |
| **Learning outcomes not practical or feasible** | Often there are too many learning outcomes specified to be covered in the time available or with the number or stage of learners. Check out equipment, rooms, other resources and facilities.  Remember you may have several activities to develop and achieve 1 learning goal |
| **Learning outcomes not linked to evaluation, little capacity to review and change** | If you are told what the outcomes are rather than setting them for yourself, be aware of the process by which you can feed back to course organisers about how the session has worked. Think about making the links between learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, assessment and evaluation transparent so that you can refresh the curriculum. Don’t assume that the learning outcomes are set in stone. Update them according to external changes, research and medical advances |

Adapted from: <https://faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning/setting-learning-objectives/common-pitfalls-and-how-to-avoid-them>

**Words and Phrases to avoid**

Watch out for verbs that are not measurable. In order for an objective to give maximum structure to learning, it should be free of vague or ambiguous words or phrases. The following lists notoriously ambiguous words or phrases which should be avoided so that the intended outcome is concise and explicit.

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| **WORDS TO AVOID** | **PHRASES TO AVOID** |
| Believe  Capacity  Comprehend  Conceptualise  Experience  Feel  Hear  Intelligence  Know  Listen  Memorise  Perceive  Realise  Recognise  See  Self-Actualise  Think  Understand | **Evidence a (n): To Become: To Reduce:**  Acquainted with  Adjusted to  Appreciation for  Awareness of  Capable of  Cognisant of  Comprehension of  Conscious of  Enjoyment of  Familiar with  Interest in  Interested in  Knowledge of  Knowledgeable about .  Understanding of |

**Always think “Can I measure that?”**

**Bloom’s Taxonomy**

*Bloom’s Taxonomy is a classification of the different objectives and skills that educators set for their students (learning objectives).*

The taxonomy was proposed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist at the University of Chicago. The terminology has been recently updated to include the following six levels of learning. These 6 levels can be used to structure the learning objectives, lessons, and assessments of your course.:

1. **Remembering:** Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long‐term memory.
2. **Understanding:** Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.
3. **Applying:** Carrying out or using a procedure for executing or implementing.
4. **Analyzing:** Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.
5. **Evaluating:** Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.
6. **Creating:** Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing.

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| **Bloom’s Level** | **Key Verbs (keywords)** | **Example Learning Objective** |
| **Create** | design, formulate, build, invent, create, compose, generate, derive, modify, develop. | *By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to design an original homework problem dealing with the principle of conservation of energy.* |
| **Evaluate** | choose, support, relate, determine, defend, judge, grade, compare, contrast, argue, justify, support, convince, select, evaluate. | By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to determine whether using conservation of energy or conservation of momentum would be more appropriate for solving a dynamics problem. |
| **Analyse** | classify, break down, categorise, analyze, diagram, illustrate, criticise, simplify, associate. | *By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to* differentiate between potential and kinetic energy. |
| **Apply** | calculate, predict, apply, solve, illustrate, use, demonstrate, determine, model, perform, present. | *By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to* calculate the kinetic energy of a projectile. |
| **Understand** | describe, explain, paraphrase, restate, give original examples of, summarise, contrast, interpret, discuss. | *By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to* describe Newton’s three laws of motion to in her/his own words |
| **Remember** | list, recite, outline, define, name, match, quote, recall, identify, label, recognise. | *By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to* recite Newton’s three laws of motion. |

Adapted from:<https://tips.uark.edu/using-blooms-taxonomy/>