Tips for Writing Learning Objectives
### Writing a learning objective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHO</strong></td>
<td>Participants, learners, physicians, and healthcare providers</td>
<td>Participants should be able</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOW</strong></td>
<td>An action verb that identifies the level of performance</td>
<td>to integrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHAT</strong></td>
<td>A description of the relevant factors associated with the desired result that specifies what learning will be demonstrated</td>
<td>the key components of a successful smoking cessation program in a busy primary care practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of learning objectives that are written specifically to address:

**Improvement in Competency**
Knowing how to do something: What a physician would do if given the opportunity but has not been put into practice yet

- *Example:* Evaluate the factors involved in developing cultural competence and how to address these clinically.

**Enhanced Performance**
The ability to apply knowledge, skills, and judgments in practice

- *Example:* Implement strategies that address cultural competence (specifically linguistic, cultural and social issues that affect mental health in the lower socio-economic community) in clinical practice.

**Change in Patient Outcomes**
The consequences of performance that have direct and positive results for patients

- *Example:* Reduce morbidity and mortality rates of the lower socio-economic population by addressing linguistic, cultural and social issues that affect the mental health in this community.
Objectives Should Address these Questions

• What should the result of the educational activity be for participants?
• What should the participant be able to do after attending the activity?
  • Make sure that objectives are measurable
  • State what the learner might do differently (behavioral change) because of what has been learned
  • Use verbs which allow measurable outcome and that can be used in the evaluation process

Source: Stanford Medicine Center Continuing Medical Education
Good Verbs to Measure Competence

- Analyze
- Assess
- Compare
- Contrast
- Design
- Develop
- Differentiate
- Distinguish
- Evaluate
- Formulate
- Plan
- Recommend

Source: Stanford Medicine Center Continuing Medical Education
Potential Learning Objectives: Competence

• Describe key elements of treatment protocols for patients with [insert disorder or disease state] and apply to applicable treatment plans in clinical practice.

• Distinguish information about emerging diagnostics, technologies, and therapeutics related to [insert disorder/disease] to treatment plans.

• Identify common high risk [insert subspecialty] problems so that they can be triaged and treated appropriately.

• Evaluate recent innovations in [insert subspecialty] clinical practice in order to assess their use for safe and effective patient care.
Potential Learning Objectives: Competence (cont.)

• Summarize recent advances in [insert subspecialty] research in order to design best-practice approaches to the diagnosis and treatment of [insert disorder/disease].

• Design diagnostic and therapeutic plans for common presentations of [insert subspecialty] diseases.

• Evaluate contributing factors to near-miss cases, including breakdowns in communication and coordination of care.

• Apply current practice guidelines in the field of medicine or surgery to patient treatment plans.
### Good Verbs to Measure Performance

- Apply
- Counsel
- Diagnose
- Employ
- Examine
- Incorporate
- Integrate
- Interpret
- Manage
- Perform
- Prescribe
- Utilize

Source: Stanford Medicine Center Continuing Medical Education
Potential Learning Objectives: Performance

- Integrate new information on up-to-date technologies, recent advances, updated guidelines, and/or best practices into daily clinical practice.
- Apply evidence-based methods for improving care to current clinical and surgical quality improvement efforts.
- Apply current practice guidelines in the field of medicine or surgery to treatment of patients.
Verbs to Avoid...

- Appreciate
- Be aware of
- Be familiar with
- Comprehend
- Define
- Discuss
- Know
- Learn
- List
- Think
- Understand

Source: Stanford Medicine Center Continuing Medical Education