

# HOW TO WRITE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## Use Case

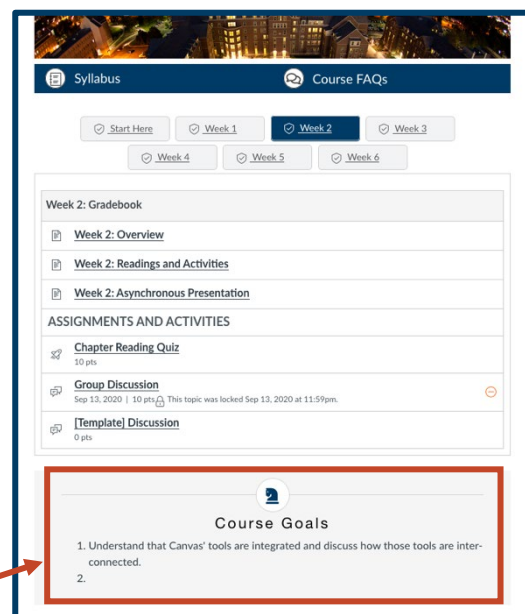
This guide supports you in working with course goals and writing out learning objectives.

## The Importance of Course Goals

Course goals are often created at the department or program level, and they are aligned with overall curricular and institutional outcomes. It is important to articulate course goals to students so that they know they are taking the right course, and so that they understand the overall scope of the course. Most importantly, course goals provide the guide for developing learning objectives. Course content is aligned with learning objectives, which are aligned with course goals. If you need to add course goals for any reason, keep these writing tips in mind:

- Course goals are more general than learning objectives.
- Goals communicate your overall vision of the course.

Best practice is to post course goals in the syllabus. If you are delivering content online, post your course goals on the home page as well.

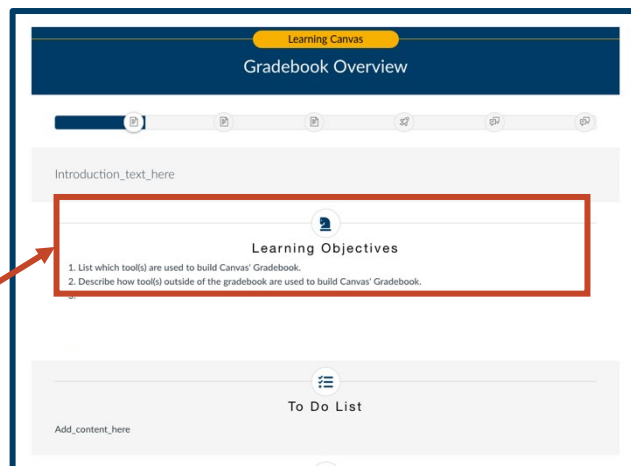


## Learning Objectives

Each lesson begins with measurable learning objectives. A learning objective describes what students should know or be able to do by the end of the lesson. Each objective must be aligned to the lesson content, activities, and assessments. If you don't have learning objectives written down, that does not mean you don't have them - just that you have not yet articulated them. It is important to the course and to students to articulate them clearly.

Once you have measurable learning objectives for each lesson, check the alignment of the stated objectives with the lesson content. If a lesson includes content that is not aligned with an objective, then the content does not belong in the lesson. If an objective does not have associated content, then either content is missing or the objective does not belong in that lesson. Be careful that learning objectives do not turn into To Do Lists; they are not the same thing.

Ideally, the alignment of objectives with all course content is clear to students. If not, do what you can to make these connections clearer. If you have well-developed learning objectives for each lesson, successful students will begin mapping what they learn in each lesson to the overall course goals. If you are just getting started with your course design and development, then use your learning objectives to guide the development of your lesson content, especially your final assessments. You must be able to also use your learning objectives to develop grading/rubric criteria.



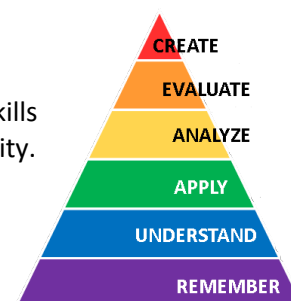
**Next Steps:** If you would like additional assistance with mapping your course content to measurable learning objectives, reach out to IDD for a consultation and/or for some helpful course mapping tools.

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## Keywords for Writing Learning Objectives

Educators use Bloom's Taxonomy to help jump-start the process of writing learning objectives. Bloom's is often presented as a scale from simpler, lower-order, foundational knowledge and skills to more complex higher-order thinking and skills that involve application, synthesis, and creativity.

**START WITH A VERB:** When you write learning objectives, think about students first. Ask yourself: What do students need to understand, and what do they need to be able to do? How can this be measured? How can I evaluate whether or not students have met the objective?



### Lower-Order Thinking and Skills (Remember and Understand)

review	order	define	recognize	duplicate
restate	locate	describe	chart	discuss
examine	inform	outline	show	quote
explain	report	indicate	translate	distinguish
label	recall	list	repeat	memorize
name	state	relate	reproduce	categorize

### Higher-Order Thinking and Skills (Apply and Analyze)

apply	operate	identify	practice	demonstrate
schedule	perform	sketch	employ	solve
illustrate	use	interpret	write	plan
analyze	differentiate	compose	propose	calculate
arrange	assemble	build	compare	experiment
contrast	modify	classify	test	collect
research	conduct	construct	create	design
detect	develop	devise	organize	execute
fix	forecast	formulate	implement	install
investigate	isolate	lay out	manage	manipulate

### Highest-Order Thinking and Skills (Evaluate and Create)

accept	judge	argue	predict	assess
rate	attach	score	adopt	select
advocate	support	estimate	evaluate	appreciate
challenge	defend	dispute	endorse	explore
express	justify	persuade	question	reflect
resolve	value	criticize	discriminate	teach