

Identifying and Writing Learning Outcomes

Clear learning outcomes are a key part of a good lesson plan and lesson delivery.

Learning outcomes should communicate the focus and purpose of the lesson. A well-written learning outcome allows teachers to assess if the pupils have learnt what they were supposed to. It also sets clear expectations for the pupils about what they will learn, and what content they need to understand.

What does a good learning outcome sound like?

A good learning outcome is:

- **Achievable** and **defines exactly what a pupil should learn and be able to do** by the end of the lesson. Learning outcomes are the minimum level of understanding a pupil needs to achieve to be successful in that lesson.
- Written from the **pupils' perspective**. It is important to use words that pupils understand.
- **Measurable** and easy to assess. It should use verbs that are observable.

This means that it needs to be written clearly:

By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to + action verb

The **action verb** says clearly what you expect the pupils to be able to do by the end of the lesson.

For example: In lower primary school, pupils need to '**know**' and '**understand**' what they have been taught. However, the verbs '**know**' and '**understand**' are very difficult to measure and are not good words to use for learning outcomes.

It is better to think of a verb that describes accurately what a pupil will have to DO to demonstrate their knowledge or understanding. So, verbs like describe, identify, recognize, define, name, recall, and list are better words to show knowledge. Verbs such as explain, summarize, discuss, report, and review are good verbs to show understanding or comprehension.

Tip: If it is difficult to find a measurable action verb, the revised Bloom's Cognitive Process Domain can help you. See **Resource 1** below to learn more about this tool.

How to write a learning outcome

Before writing the learning outcome, it is important to clarify what you want your pupils to learn and what you want them to do to *prove* to you that they have learnt it. These steps help you to identify what you want pupils to learn and to turn them into learning outcomes.

1. Identify the unit.

- Go to the syllabus to identify the unit you will teach.

2. Identify 'Specific Learning Outcomes'.

- In the column titled 'Specific Learning Outcomes', look at what the pupil must achieve to complete the unit successfully. It will likely take more than one lesson.
- **Ask yourself:** How much of the 'Specific Learning Outcomes' can the pupils realistically learn in one lesson? Write it down. This helps you focus the lesson.

3. Identify the new learning. Be specific.

- **Ask yourself:** What *exactly* do the pupils need to understand to be successful in the lesson/subject/topic? Write it down.
- **Ask yourself:** What *exactly* do you want the pupils to do? Write it down.

4. Identify previous knowledge.

- Check that you are teaching the subject at the correct level. The learning outcomes and activities should not be too easy. Look back through the syllabus to see what previous learning (if any) has taken place on this subject. This helps you set the lesson at the correct level.
- **Ask yourself:** What previous knowledge/learning do the pupils need to have to work on the new material? Write it down.

5. Write down how pupils will demonstrate their learning.

- **Ask yourself:** What will the pupils have to *do* to prove that they fully understand what was taught in the lesson?
- The pupils will probably have to do more than one thing to **prove** that they understand the subject. Write them down.

These will become the learning outcomes. The learning outcomes should be things that the pupils can do by themselves at the end of the lesson, with no help from the teacher. This will show that they understand what was taught.

6. Rewrite these actions with observable verbs.



7. Write them as a learning outcome.

- Check if the actions in Step 5 are written as observable **verbs**. Reword them if they are not. *E.g. 'state', 'choose', 'explain', 'name'.*

Remember: Learning outcomes must be measurable. Never use words like 'understand', 'think', 'be aware of', 'learn', 'know' etc. – these cannot be measured.

- Rewrite these actions so they start with the phrase 'By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to...'
- These are the learning outcomes!

Example

Let's look at Unit 13 from the Class 2 English Language Arts syllabus (page 19):

Step 1: Identify the unit.

In the column titled 'Suggested Topics/Themes/Units', it states 'UNIT 13: Adjectives'.

Step 2: Identify 'Specific Learning Outcomes'.

In the 'Specific Learning Outcomes' column (see below), there is a lot of knowledge that pupils are expected to gain about *adjectives*. In this case there seems to be three distinct areas of learning connected with this unit. They are:

- a) Knowing and understanding what adjectives are and how to use them.
- b) Knowing and understanding comparative and superlative adjectives and how to use them.
- c) Knowing and understanding how adjectives can reinforce and challenge stereotypes.

(These are not learning outcomes as they cannot be easily measured.)

It may take time for pupils to *understand* something, especially if it is their first time working on it. Let's look at the learning above: Before pupils start learning about point 'c', they need to understand point 'b'. Before they can start working on point 'b', they need to understand point 'a'.

A 35-minute lesson is a relatively short time, so it is better to do one thing properly. You need to ask yourself what is realistic to complete in one 35-minute lesson, which includes a recap on previous important prior knowledge, introduction to new material, and an activity to consolidate the new knowledge. In this case, it might be worth focusing only on point 'a'.

Suggested Topics/Themes /Units	Specific Learning Outcomes	Recommended Teaching Styles or Pedagogical Approaches	Assessment Methods	Suggested Learning & Teaching Resources
UNIT 13: Adjectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils should explain what adjectives are, state examples and use them to describe themselves and other classroom objects. <p>Pupils should identify the comparative and superlative of simple adjectives and use them in simple sentences.</p> <p>Pupils should identify adjectives that reinforce stereotypes.</p> <p>Pupils should identify adjectives that challenge stereotypes demonstrate avoid reinforcing stereotypes.</p>	<p>a. Meaning and examples of adjectives e.g. fat, thin, tall, new, big, small, wet, hot, cold, pretty, etc.</p> <p>b. Uses of adjectives in sentences e.g. Mary is a clever girl. (ii) Peter is a tall boy.</p> <p>c. Simple introduction of degrees of adjectives – Comparism between two and three forms with examples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral drills. Explain and given example of adjectives. Use simple adjectives in sentences. Know the comparatives and superlatives of simple adjectives, using 'er' and 'est'. 	<p>(a) Textbook</p> <p>(b) Flash cards</p> <p>(c) Others</p>

Step 3: Identify the new learning. Be specific.

In Step 2, you identified what needs to be learnt, and how much needs to be learnt in this lesson. Since the pupils will be learning about adjectives, they need to understand *what* an adjective is, *where* they are used, and *how* to use them. Using these statements as a guide can help you focus on what the pupils would need to do to prove to you that they understand *what an adjective is, where they are used, and how to use them.*

Step 4: Identify previous knowledge.

A quick look through the syllabus shows that this is the first time the pupils have worked on adjectives. Therefore, although they may use adjectives when they speak, they have not had any previous learning on adjectives.

Step 5: Write down how pupils will demonstrate their learning.

You should ask yourself: What would a pupil have to do, to prove they understand what an adjective is? It would be reasonable to expect a pupil to prove their understanding by explaining to the teacher what an adjective is, and explaining what it does. But they would also have to show the teacher that they can recognize adjectives and use them correctly. Only by doing this, would the teacher be confident that the pupil understands.

Did you notice there were three things that a pupil needs to do to show their understanding? The clues were the words '**explaining**', '**recognize**', and '**use**'. These words will form the basis of the learning outcomes for that lesson.

Steps 6-7: Rewrite these actions with observable verbs and write them as a learning outcome.

The learning outcomes would be written as:


By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to:

- **Explain** what an adjective is (i.e. a word used to describe a noun).
- **Describe** what an adjective does in a sentence (i.e. they give the reader more detail about an object, person, place etc. E.g. colour, size, shape, material, and more).
- **Identify** the adjectives and the nouns in a written passage.
- **Construct** at least four different adjectives to describe objects or people in the classroom.

If the lesson required the use of specific adjectives, for example relating to size, the learning outcomes could be:

By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to:

- **Explain** what an adjective is (i.e. a word used to describe a noun).
- **Describe** what an adjective does in a sentence (i.e. they give the reader more detail about an object, person, place etc. E.g. colour, size, shape, material, and more).

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- **State** at least four adjectives that describe an object's size (e.g. big, large, huge, small, tiny, little, etc.).
 - **Construct** at least three sentences using different adjectives to describe items of different sizes in the classroom.

By using the words 'explain', 'describe', 'identify', 'construct', and 'state', the pupils know exactly what they will need to do to demonstrate their understanding, and the teacher can easily assess the pupils against these actions.

Resource 1: Learning outcome action verbs

This table is based on the Revised Bloom's Cognitive Process Domain.¹ It provides some useful action verbs that you can use to write clear and measurable learning outcomes. Most learning outcomes for lower primary school will be focused on the Knowledge and Understanding level but some may be at the Application level.

To enable pupils to demonstrate their level	Examples of associated learning outcome verbs			
<p>Remember</p> <p>Retrieve, recall, or recognize relevant knowledge from long-term memory (e.g. recall dates of events in Sierra Leone's history, remember the components of a bacterial cell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cite • define • describe • identify • label 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • list • locate • match • name • outline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quote • recall • recognize • report • reproduce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retrieve • show • state • tabulate • tell
<p>Understand</p> <p>Demonstrate comprehension through one or more forms of explanation (e.g. classify a mental illness, compare ritual practices in two different religions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abstract • arrange • articulate • associate • categorize • clarify • conclude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construct meaning • discuss • estimate • explain • give examples of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illustrate • interpret • match • outline • paraphrase • predict • rearrange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rephrase • represent • restate • summarize
<p>Apply</p> <p>Use information or a skill in a new situation (e.g. use a formula to solve a problem for which it is appropriate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply • calculate • carry out • classify • complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate • examine • experiment • generalize • illustrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modify • organize • implement • interpret • outline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predict • solve • transfer • translate • use

¹ Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

To enable pupils to demonstrate their level	Examples of associated learning outcome verbs			
<p>Analyze</p> <p>Break down information into smaller parts to understand how it is organized; differentiate between facts, judgments, and inferences (e.g. examine motives or causes, make inferences and gather evidence to support generalizations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze • assume • break into parts • categorize • classify • compare • conclude • contrast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • differentiate • discover • dissect • distinguish • divide • examine • find coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus • function • infer • inspect • list • organize • outline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reassemble • rebuild • relate • select • simplify • survey • test
<p>Evaluate</p> <p>Make judgments based on criteria and standards (e.g. detect inconsistencies or fallacies within a process or product, judge which of two methods is the way to solve a given problem)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appraise • assess • compare • conclude • consider • convince 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critique • decide • determine • evaluate • grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • judge • justify • measure • rank • rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommend • review • score • select • test
<p>Create</p> <p>Put elements together to form something new; reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure (e.g. design a new set for a theatre production, invent a product, compose a piece of music, write a play)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrange • build • combine • compose • construct • create • design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop • generate • hypothesize • integrate • invent • make 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modify • perform • plan • prepare • produce • propose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rearrange • reorganize • rewrite • specify • synthesize • write

When writing learning outcomes, avoid using words that are vague and which are more difficult to assess. This includes words and phrases such as: know; understand; believe; learn; be aware of; appreciate; have a good grasp of; be interested in; be familiar with; realize the significance of.



The **LEGO** Foundation

This resource was developed as part of a technical assistance partnership between the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and Right To Play (RTP),² focusing on primary education. The partnership seeks to support the national education priority of improving learning outcomes by strengthening play-based learning in schools in Sierra Leone. The partnership also includes BRAC,³ who are focusing on early childhood development/education. Together, MBSSE, Right To Play, and BRAC aim to ensure a smooth transition from early childhood development to primary school.

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² More information about Right To Play can be found at <http://www.righttoplay.com>.

³ More information about BRAC can be found at <https://bracinternational.org>.