

# SLO Action Verbs

Action verbs are abundant in the English language, but how do we know which ones are right to include in our SLO statements?

Benjamin Bloom, an American educational psychologist, created what is now known as “Bloom’s Taxonomy” and this taxonomy is frequently used to assist faculty in creating SLOs that properly address student learning. Bloom’s taxonomy is a taxonomy of learning behaviors and is organized into three domains: the cognitive (i.e., knowledge/mental skills), the affective (i.e., emotional skills), and the psychomotor (i.e., physical skills). While the cognitive domain is the most well-known of the three domains, the affective and psychomotor domains also contain important learning behaviors identified by Bloom (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1965).

Revisions to the taxonomy structure have been made since Bloom’s original work and currently, each level of learning in each domain contains action verbs to describe that type and level of learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Krathwohl, 2002).

The categories below and the actions verbs that are related to each category should assist you in choosing the appropriate action verbs for your course SLOs. Choose an action verb from one of the three domains for each of your SLOs. All of your SLO action verbs should not come from one domain or from one category of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

## Cognitive Domain: Definitions and Action Verbs

The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills (Bloom, 1956).

This table includes information from the revised cognitive domain, beginning with the lowest level of learning and ending with the highest. The categories can be thought of as degrees of difficulty.

Category and Definition	Action Verbs for SLOs
<u>Remembering</u> : The learner is able to recall, restate, and remember learned information.	define, duplicate, enumerate, group, indicate, label, list, listen, locate, match, memorize, name, quote, recall, recite, recognize, record, relate, repeat, reproduce, restate, review, select, show, sort, state, tell, trace, underline, write
<u>Understanding</u> : Comprehending the meaning, translation, and interpretation of instructions or problems.	account for, annotate, associate, classify, characterize, cite, comprehend, convert, define, describe, detail, discuss, estimate, explain, express, extrapolate, identify, indicate, interpret, observe, paraphrase, predict, recognize, relate, reorganize, rephrase, report, research, restate, review, rewrite, show, summarize, translate
<u>Applying</u> : (critical thinking) The learner grasps the meaning of information by interpreting and translating what has been learned.	adapt, apply, capture, calculate, change, classify, collect, complete, compute, construct, customize, derive, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, express, generalize, illustrate, interpret, make, manipulate, modify, operate, organize, produce, show, solve, support, tabulate, translate, use, utilize
<u>Analyzing</u> : (critical thinking) The learner breaks information into its parts to best understand that information in an attempt to identify evidence for a conclusion.	analyze, arrange, audit, calculate, categorize, compare, conclude, contrast, correlate, debate, detect, diagnose, diagram, differentiate, discriminate, dissect, distinguish, examine, experiment, infer, order, outline, prioritize, relate, research, scrutinize, separate, sequence, sift, summarize, test
<u>Evaluating</u> : (critical thinking) The learner makes decisions based on in-depth reflection, criticism, and assessment.	appraise, argue, assess, choose, compare, conclude, criticize, critique, debate, decide, deduce, defend, determine, differentiate, discriminate, disprove, evaluate, infer, judge, justify, measure, predict, prioritize, probe, prove, rank, rate, recommend, revise, select, validate, verify
<u>Creating</u> : (critical thinking) The learner creates new ideas and information using what has previously been learned.	act, adapt, assemble, blend, build, code, compile, combine, compose, concoct, construct, create, cultivate, depict, design, develop, devise, formulate, forecast, generate, hypothesize, imagine, invent, model, organize, originate, predict, plan, prepare, propose, produce, set up, solve, theorize, write

## The Affective Domain: Definitions and Action Verbs

The categories in the affective domain relate to learners' attitudes, behaviors and values. Like the cognitive domain, the affective domain has hierarchal categories. As a learner moves up in the categories, they become more involved, committed and self-reliant. In the lower levels, learners are considered externally motivated and in the higher ones they are internally motivated.

The information in this table begins with the lowest level of affective learning and ends with the highest level (Bloomsburg, 2011).

Category and Definition	Action Verbs for SLOs
<p><u>Receiving</u>: (awareness; external motivation) The learner is willing and open to listening to certain stimuli or phenomena.</p>	<p>accept, acknowledge, ask, attend, describe, explain, follow, focus, listen, locate, observe, receive, recognize, retain</p>
<p><u>Responding</u>: (react; external motivation) Learners actively participate and attend or react to particular phenomena. However, learners may be doing so because they are required or expected to participate, respond, or obey when asked or directed to do something.</p>	<p>behave, clarify, comply, contribute, cooperate, discuss, examine, follow, interpret, model, perform, present, question, react, respond, show, study</p>
<p><u>Valuing</u>: (comprehend and act; external motivation) The worth or value a learner places on a specific object, phenomenon, or behavior. Valuing is based on the internalization of a set of specific values and the learner expresses these values in his/her overt behavior.</p>	<p>accept, adapt, choose, differentiate, initiate, invite, justify, prefer, propose, recognize, value</p>
<p><u>Organizing</u>: (personal value system; internal motivation) A learner commits to a certain set of values. During this process, the learner organizes his/her values, prioritizes some over others, reorganizes internal conflicts between them, and creates a unique value system. The learner then can make appropriate choices between things that are and are not valued.</p>	<p>adapt, adjust, alter, arrange, build, change, compare, contrast, customize, develop, formulate, improve, manipulate, modify, practice, prioritize, reconcile, relate, revise</p>
<p><u>Internalizing</u>: (adopt behavior; internal motivation) All behaviors a learner displays are consistent with the learner's value system. The resulting behaviors are consistent, predictable, and represent the characteristics of the learner. These behaviors could be categorized into social, emotional, and personal patterns of learner adjustment.</p>	<p>act, authenticate, characterize, defend, display, embody, habituate, influence, internalize, produce, qualify, questions, solve, validate, verify</p>

## The Psychomotor Domain: Definitions and Action Verbs

The categories in the psychomotor domain relate to the development of physical skills and manual tasks. These skills demand certain levels of physical dexterity. Unfortunately, Bloom never published his manuscript on the psychomotor domain. Several scholars have published works with hierarchical categories for the psychomotor domain. For the purposes of student learning outcomes, the psychomotor taxonomy created by Simpson in 1972 will be explained here (Bloomsburg, 2011).

The information in this table begins with the lowest level of psychomotor skills and ends with the highest level.

Category and Definition	Action Verbs for SLOs
<u>Perception</u> : The learner's ability to use his/her senses to absorb data for guiding movement.	describe, detect, differentiate, distinguish, hear, identify, recognize, select
<u>Set</u> : The learner's readiness to act. This could be considered a person's mental, physical, and emotional mindsets.	arrange, begin, display, explain, move, proceed, react, show, state, volunteer
<u>Guided Response</u> : The early stage in learning a complex skill. This stage includes learner trial and error.	copies, traces, follows, reacts, reproduces, responds
<u>Mechanism</u> : The intermediate stage in learning a complex skill. Learned responses are now habitual and movements can be performed with basic proficiency.	assembles, calibrates, constructs, dismantles, displays, fastens, fixes, manipulates, measures, mends, mixes, organizes, sketches
<u>Complex Overt Response</u> : The expert stage in learning a complex skill. The learner can perform motor acts that involve complex movement patterns that are quick, accurate, and highly coordinated. The learner performs without hesitation.	Assembles, calibrates, constructs, dismantles, displays, fastens, fixes, manipulates, <u>measures, mends, mixes, organizes, sketches.</u> *Note: while these are the same action verbs as in the mechanism stage, here an adverb or adjective should be placed before the verb to indicate performance is quicker/more accurate.
<u>Adaptation</u> : Skills are well developed and the learner can modify movement patterns to fit special requirements.	Adapts, alters, changes, rearranges, reorganizes, revises, solves.
<u>Origination</u> : The learner creates new movement patterns to fit a particular problem or situation. The learner is creative with his or her highly developed skills.	Arranges, builds, combines, composes, constructs, creates, designs, initiates, makes, modifies, originates.

## References

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