

Incorporating Critical Thinking Skills Into Expected Learning Outcomes Statements

Many faculty members choose to incorporate words that reflect critical or higher-order thinking into their learning outcomes statements. Bloom (1956) developed a taxonomy outlining the different types of thinking skills people use in the learning process. Bloom argued that people use different levels of thinking skills to process different types of information and situations. Some of these are basic cognitive skills (such as memorization) while others are complex skills (such as creating new ways to apply information). These skills are often referred to as *critical thinking skills* or *higher-order thinking skills*.

Bloom proposed the following taxonomy of thinking skills. All levels of Bloom's taxonomy of thinking skills can be incorporated into expected learning outcome statements. Recently, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) adapted Bloom's model to include language that is oriented towards the language used in expected learning outcome statements. A summary of Anderson and Krathwohl's revised version of Bloom's taxonomy of critical thinking is provided below.

Definitions of the different levels of thinking skills in Bloom's taxonomy

1. **Remember** – recalling relevant terminology, specific facts, or different procedures related to information and/or course topics. At this level, a student can remember something, but may not really understand it.
2. **Understand** – the ability to grasp the meaning of information (facts, definitions, concepts, etc.) that has been presented.
3. **Apply** – being able to use previously learned information in different situations or in problem solving.
4. **Analyze** – the ability to break information down into its component parts. Analysis also refers to the process of examining information in order to make conclusions regarding cause and effect, interpreting motives, making inferences, or finding evidence to support statements/arguments.
5. **Evaluate** – being able to judge the value of information and/or sources of information based on personal values or opinions.
6. **Create** – the ability to creatively or uniquely apply prior knowledge and/or skills to produce new and original thoughts, ideas, processes, etc. At this level, students are involved in creating their own thoughts and ideas.

(Adapted from information from Ball State University accessed at
<http://web.bsu.edu/IRAA/AA/WB/chapter2.htm>)

List of Action Words Related to Critical Thinking Skills

Here is a list of action words that can be used when creating the expected student learning outcomes related to critical thinking skills in a course. These terms are organized according to the different levels of higher-order thinking skills contained in Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised version of Bloom's taxonomy.

REMEMBER	UNDERSTAND	APPLY	ANALYZE	EVALUATE	CREATE
Count	Associate	Add	Analyze	Appraise	Categorize
Define	Compute	Apply	Arrange	Assess	Combine
Describe	Convert	Calculate	Breakdown	Compare	Compile
Draw	Defend	Change	Combine	Conclude	Compose
Identify	Discuss	Classify	Design	Contrast	Create
Label	Distinguish	Complete	Detect	Criticize	Drive
List	Estimate	Compute	Develop	Critique	Design
Match	Explain	Demonstrate	Diagram	Determine	Devise
Name	Extend	Discover	Differentiate	Grade	Explain
Outline	Extrapolate	Divide	Discriminate	Interpret	Generate
Point	Generalize	Examine	Illustrate	Judge	Group
Quote	Give examples	Graph	Infer	Justify	Integrate
Read	Infer	Interpolate	Outline	Measure	Modify
Recall	Paraphrase	Manipulate	Point out	Rank	Order
Recite	Predict	Modify	Relate	Rate	Organize
Recognize	Rewrite	Operate	Select	Support	Plan
Record	Summarize	Prepare	Separate	Test	Prescribe
Repeat		Produce	Subdivide		Propose
Reproduce		Show	Utilize		Rearrange
Select		Solve			Reconstruct
State		Subtract			Related
Write		Translate			Reorganize
		Use			Revise
					Rewrite
					Summarize
					Transform
					Specify

(Adapted from information from Kansas State University accessed at
<http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/Learning/action.htm>)

This handout was taken from the TLTC's handbook on "Writing and Assessing Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes". A complete version of this handbook can be accessed at <http://www.tlct.ttu.edu/content/asp/assessment/handbook/asp> .