

Writing SMART Learning Objectives

To be useful, learning objectives should be SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Results-Focused
- Time-Focused

Learning objectives focus your learning on specific areas and can help you maximize your time spent in an internship. Further, discussing your learning goals with your supervisor helps to ensure that you will spend your time productively during the internship and that all parties involved are aware of the learning you are trying to achieve.

What are learning objectives?

Learning objectives can fall into the following categories:

- Knowledge or Skills Acquisition: Knowledge or skills you hope to acquire during the internship such as learning to use appropriate procedures, equipment, or methods.
- Personal/Professional: Skills you hope to apply or cultivate such as self-confidence, interpersonal skills, working effectively with others, professional meeting/email/telephone etiquette, networking, written communication, relationships with supervisors, time management, organization, decision making, etc.
- Career Knowledge: Gaining new information regarding the company, the industry, or job duties.
- Other: Depending on the internship, there may be additional categories of learning objectives. Consider your field of choice and the critical knowledge/skills you would like to obtain.

Steps to writing learning objectives

For each objective, answer the following three questions:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- How are you going to accomplish it? (What steps will you take to accomplish your objective? What activities will you do? How will you acquire the learning? Under what conditions will the learning occur?)
- How you will measure your objective? (What evidence will you have to demonstrate that learning has taken place? What criteria will be used to evaluate your evidence? Who will do the evaluation?)

SMART Learning Objectives

In each case below, the same objective is stated in two different ways. In the "Vague" description, the objective is either too general or not sufficiently measurable. In the "Specific" example, the same objective has been stated SMARTly (in a manner that is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-focused, and Time-focused).

Objective Type	Vague	Specific
Skills Acquisition	I will learn how to troubleshoot IT issues for my company.	By December 15th, I will be able to troubleshoot office software, including Microsoft Word and Excel, over the telephone with less than 3% error rate.
Skills Acquisition	I will evaluate the effectiveness of my organization's marketing.	By March 15th, I will develop, distribute, gather, evaluate, and report on a customer survey related to my organization's marketing.
Knowledge Acquisition	I would like to know more about the chemical make-up of common drugs used in the hospital.	By the middle of my internship, I will list the 40 common medications I observe being used by referring to patients' charts, then research their chemical composition, and record this data in my database.
Personal / Professional	I want to learn how to deal with irritable customers.	I will develop four different responsive conversation techniques and briefly describe each in my log. I will record reactions of customers to these techniques and report by May 28.
Career Knowledge	I want to better understand the hospitality industry.	By the end of the internship, I will have interviewed a professional who has been in the hospitality industry at least four years and ask them about typical career paths, job duties, professional associations, and ways to advance one's career in this industry.
Skills Acquisition	I want to assist some children to learn a new skill.	By the middle of my internship, I will have taught a group of ten children ball throwing athletic skills. The children will demonstrate their skills by achieving at least a minimum score which I will determine as a proficiency level.

<http://explearning.ucf.edu/registered-students/tips-for-success/writing-smart-learning-objectives/195/>

Examples of strong Learning Objectives:

- I will improve my skills with the Bloomberg financial software by learning how to monitor certain asset classes through shadowing my supervisor and gaining hands-on experience. Improvement will be evaluated by pre- and post-internship assessments by my supervisor.
- I will network and establish professional contacts in the marketing industry by attending PR events and attending client meetings, with a goal of establishing ten relevant contacts.
- I will learn how to address buyers' questions relating to commercial real estate by accompanying a Licensing Associate during five or more property viewings and assisting in at least one customer presentation.
- I will learn the editorial process of online magazine publishing by attending staff meetings and shadowing the Chief Editor, who will critique my report on the editorial process.
- I will become proficient in Microsoft Excel by creating financial spreadsheets to be used to conduct company financial analyses. My spreadsheets and written analysis will be evaluated by my site supervisor.
- I will develop stronger people skills and learn how to establish a strong customer relationship by attending client meetings and listening to telephone conversations. I also will conduct three practice client presentations to department staff, and assist with at least one actual client presentation. My supervisor will evaluate my skills in these presentations.
- While interning in the state senator's office, I will learn the methods involved in researching legislation for committee assignments. I will develop additional written communication skills by drafting responses to constituents' letters. In addition, I will research and produce a paper expanding on my coursework in political theory as it applies to current practice in campaign planning.
- As an intern in the hospital's human resource department, I will build upon my classroom learning regarding wage and hour laws by reviewing current practice in the payroll department. I also will expand my knowledge of employee benefits and insurance by shadowing the benefits staff in group presentations to new employees and appointments with individual employees. I will learn more about recruiting by helping to develop and validate skill assessment tests for job applicants.
- As a Youth Empowerment Services intern, I will expand on my psychology and sociology classes by observing group counseling sessions for teenagers (14-17 years old). When appropriate, I will develop my potential as a facilitator by assisting my site supervisor with teen groups. Through research and observation, I will learn to administer and interpret personality inventories. In addition, I will research teenage alcoholism and produce a paper outlining at least five factors that contribute to this problem.
- During my accounting internship, I will study the methods of cost accounting used by this firm. In addition, I will learn to apply the principles of accountancy to tax preparation for both individuals and small businesses. My major goal for this internship is to help me determine if the specific tasks, structure and environment of a medium-size accounting firm is an appropriate career goal for me.