Writing Tips for Learning Goals and Success Criteria

Use the definitions.

Learning Goals specify the learning that is intended for a lesson, and Success Criteria indicate how students can demonstrate that learning.

When you are writing them, remember:

- Learning Goals should refer to understanding, knowledge, skills, or application.
- Success Criteria should refer to a concrete learning performance: something students will say, do, make, or write to indicate they are moving toward the Learning Goal.

Because Success Criteria are aligned to a particular Learning Goal, thinking of them on their own (without the Learning Goal they "belong to") does not make a lot of sense. This relationship between the two (Success Criteria refer to and depend on a Learning Goal) means that Learning Goals need to be written first, before Success Criteria.

Pay attention to your choice of verb.

When writing Learning Goals and Success Criteria, it can be helpful to focus on selecting the right verb, which is often the first word of the sentence.

Learning Goals often begin with verbs like *know*, *develop*, *become fluent*, *apply*, *understand*, *use*, or *extend*. Success Criteria often begin with verbs like *explain*, *describe*, *model*, *show*, *write*, *justify*, or *create*. Some examples of Learning Goals and Success Criteria are:

Learning Goal	Success Criteria
Understand how the structure of DNA relates to its function	Define the terms *structure* and *function*; describe the structure of DNA; explain why the base pair rule means DNA forms complementary strands and a double helix
Use what you know about reading strategies so that you can understand what the text says as you read	Use what you know about sounds and letters; ask yourself if the language makes sense; think about what you already know about the topic; use context clues when you come to a word you do not know
Know how advertisers use persuasive techniques in multi-modal advertisements	Describe how soft and hard sells are conveyed; explain the positive and negative emotions an advertisement aims to provoke; describe what makes an advertisement particularly effective and/or persuasive
Represent and solve addition and subtraction word problems by using different representations	Explain what each number in the problem means; explain why you chose to add or subtract; explain how your representation shows adding or subtracting

Learning Goals are not Learning Experiences.

Learning Goals describe what students are going to learn, whereas Learning Experiences describe how students are going to acquire that learning (i.e., what they are going to do in order to move towards the Learning Goal).

While Learning Goals and Learning Experiences are related, they are fundamentally different components of formative assessment, and it is essential to distinguish between them.

A Learning Goal comes before a learning experience; it is, in fact, the reason for the Learning Experience. What this means for lesson planning is that the Learning Goal is established first, so that it can orient the design of aligned Learning Experiences. Put simply, the question, "What will my students be doing?" should only be asked when there is a clear answer to the question, "Why will they be doing it?"

Below are examples of Learning Goals and Learning Experiences. Because the Learning Goals are substantive, students will need many more than the one Learning Experience shown to meet the goal.

Learning Goal	Learning Experience
Understand the chronicle of events that led up to the internment of Japanese-Americans in 1942 and the causal relationships among these events	Create a timeline of the events leading up to the history of Japanese-American Internment
Understand how authors use archetypes to help us quickly recognize characters	Read two texts and identify which author uses an archetype and which author uses a stereotype
Use graphical representations to analyze exponential functions	Explore what happens to the graph of the function, $f(x) = a^x$ when the value of a changes

Learning Goals are lesson-sized.

Learning Goals describe an amount of learning that is manageable in the context of a lesson (which might be 2 or 3 class periods).

It is important to remember, however, that Learning Goals are part of a much more extensive progression of learning that builds from Learning Goals, through Building Blocks, all the way to standards. Even though Learning Goals are lesson-sized, they are not isolated or discrete: the learning they describe is aligned to a standard and connected to other prior, concurrent, and future learning.

What Makes a Good Learning Goal?

- When they are clear and linked to the big picture of learning (the purpose and the context for learning)

- When they are focused on the learning

- When they are written and/or communicated from the students' perspective (i.e., not in teacher- or standards-speak)

- When they are realistic and time-limited (i.e., span one lesson)

- When they lead to rich, productive learning experiences

Examples of Good Learning Goals

Standard - Grade 7: Students explore/learn the relationships between and among representations, concepts, characteristics, properties, etc.)	*Today we are going to learn how different representations show proportional relationships.[1]*
Standard - Grade 1: Students write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events; include some details regarding what happened.)	*I am learning how to add detail to my writing.*
Science Framework - Grades 6-8: Science aims to build explanations of the natural world; hypotheses are potential explanations for what we observe in the natural world; different scientists may interpret the same data is different ways.[2]	*We are learning how to examine data and make hypotheses about what the data tell us.*
Standard - Grades 9-10: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.	• *Analyze how Tom Stoppard draws from Hamlet and develops the identity of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.* • *How does Tom Stoppard draw from Hamlet and develop the identity of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead?*

Examples of Weak Learning Goals[3]

Paint a landscape.	*Focused on doing.*
Recognize triangular numbers.	*Does not lead to rich, productive learning.*
Complete 10 questions on page 25.	*Not focused on learning.*

[1]EDC, 2013
[2]Understanding Science, UC Berkeley
[3]From Wiliam and Leahy, 2015

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Use science equipment and kitchen compounds to carry our experiments.	*Not focused on learning; not clear; not linked to the big picture of learning.*
Create a cartoon.	*Not clear; focused on doing; not linked to the big picture of learning.*

Make sure Success Criteria are visible.

Learning happens inside a student's head, but Success Criteria help make that learning visible.

Learning Goals might be invisible because they often happen inside a student's head—you cannot directly observe things like "knowing" or "understanding." This is why Success Criteria should always be written as performances of learning that you can actually observe, things students will say, do, make, or write that will make the status of their learning visible.

What Makes a Good Success Criteria

- When they are clear and closely linked to the Learning Goal
- When they continue to focus on the learning
- When they illustrate the expected learning
- When they are written and/or communicated from the students' perspective (i.e., not in teacher- or standards-speak)
- When they support rich, productive learning experiences

Examples of Good Learning Goals for Each of the Learning Goals Above

Today we are going to learn how different representations show proportional relationships.	• *I can show proportional relationships using at least two different representations.* • *I can explain how the representation I created shows a proportional relationship.*
I am learning how to add detail to my writing. I will know I am successful when I can write about:	• *Who was there* • *When it happened* • *Where it happened* • *What happened*
We are learning how to examine data and make hypotheses about what the data tell us.	• *I can make a hypothesis from the evidence I have.* • *I can justify my hypothesis.* • *I can revise my hypothesis based on new data.* • *I can say what additional information I would need to further test my hypothesis.*

Analyze how Tom Stoppard draws from <u>Hamlet</u> and develops the identity of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in <u>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</u>.	• *Describe Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's identities in <u>Hamlet</u>, citing sections of the text as evidence.* • *Explain how Stoppard develops their identities in his play, citing sections of the text as evidence.*

Examples of Weak Learning Goals that Lead to Weak Success Criteria

Complete 10 questions on page 25.	*I can complete 10 questions accurately (does not illustrate the learning)*
Paint a landscape.	*I can complete my landscape painting* *(There may be other criteria for this activity but it is not clear what they might be because the learning is not specified.)*
Recognize triangular numbers.	*I know the formula of a triangular number (not related to the goal)*

Make Learning Goals and Success Criteria accessible to students.

Learning Goals and Success Criteria, which are critical components of peer and self-assessment, should be expressed in language that students can understand and use.

Accessible Learning Goals and Success Criteria enables students to participate in and contribute to the learning community by evaluating their own and their peers' learning. When students internalize Learning Goals and Success Criteria, this also helps them make meaning of challenging content. A clear sense of what the goal is and what it will look like as they move towards that goal can act like a cognitive lighthouse, a feature of the cognitive landscape with which students can organize and orient their learning.