

An Introduction to Bloom's Taxonomy: Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Domains

*For assistance in writing learning outcomes, consider starting with **Bloom's taxonomy**. Here's background information on Bloom's.*

At the 1948 American Psychological Association Convention in Boston, a group of college and university professionals formed the Committee of College and University Examiners, in response to the need to create a classification system that provided a framework for communicating educational goals and assessing the level at which students have met those objectives. The *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (1956), which resulted from their subsequent meetings, established three learning domains – **cognitive, affective, and psychomotor** – that educators continue to use today. Benjamin S. Bloom, educational psychologist and the handbook's editor, became the namesake of the widely used Bloom's taxonomy.

Taxonomy of Educational Objectives imparts Bloom's six-level, hierarchical, **cognitive** framework that begins with a basic and concrete act, obtainment of knowledge, and culminates in a more complex and abstract function, evaluation of that knowledge. Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl, in *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing* (2001), revised the original Bloom's taxonomy by modifying the hierarchical order of cognitive development, and changing each category name from a noun to a verb. The revised taxonomy begins with the basic function to remember and culminates in the action to create.* For assistance in constructing student learning outcomes, see the cognitive table for the revised taxonomy, its associated subcategories, and suggested synonyms.

In 1964, eight years following the original publication of Bloom's taxonomy, Krathwohl, Bloom, and Bertram Masia put forth a five-level scale of learning in the **affective** domain. In *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Book 2: Affective Domain* (1964), the authors found that the affective domain defines the various levels of students' "interests, attitudes, appreciations, values, and emotional sets or biases" (p. 7). The taxonomy begins with receiving or demonstrating an awareness of an attitude or value and culminates in absorbing that attitude or value into a "life outlook" (1964, p. 27). See the affective table for the taxonomy, its associated subcategories, and suggested synonyms.

While Bloom and his colleagues, in their 1956 handbook, introduced the **psychomotor** domain as entailing kinesthetic skills or physical dexterity, the Committee of College and University Examiners did not publish work on the domain. Other scholars, however, have explored the domain. In the 1960s and 1970s, E. J. Simpson, R. H. Dave, and A. J. Harrow contributed to the discussion. Dave's (1970) five-level taxonomy begins with imitation (or copying others) and culminates in naturalization of those physical skills or movements. See the psychomotor table for Dave's taxonomy and suggested synonyms.

*For an alternative to Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, see Fink's taxonomy. L. Dee Fink, educational development specialist, positions his six-part taxonomy within the context of integrated course design that aligns student learning outcomes with authentic assessments.

Sources:

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Bloom, B. (Ed.). (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc.

Dave, R. H. (1970). Psychomotor levels. In R. J. Armstrong (Ed.), *Developing and writing behavioral objectives* (pp. 33-34). Tucson, AZ: Educational Innovators Press.

Krathwohl, D. R., Bloom, B. S., & Masia, B. B. (1964). *Taxonomy of educational objectives. Handbook II: Affective domain*. New York: Longman.

For an alternative to Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, see:

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

For other psychomotor taxonomies, see:

Harrow, A. H. (1972). *A taxonomy of the psychomotor domain: A guide for developing behavioral objectives*. New York: David McKay.

Simpson, E. J. (1966). *The classification of educational objectives, psychomotor domain*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.