The foundation of good training is a well crafted Learning Goal supported by well structured Learning Objectives. This applies to face-to-face, online, or blended learning.

 A good **Learning Goal** and set of learning objectives provide focus to the course.   If something doesn't support one or more the learning objectives, it doesn't go into the course, no matter how interesting it may be.

A learning goal describes the large scale aims of the course.   It is the 30,000 foot view of the course purpose and tells the learner at a glance what he or she will be expected to know and be able to do after completing the instruction.   Each course has one learning goal. Each learning goal is usually stated as a single sentence.

Here are some examples of learning goals:

   - Students will learn how to administer a TeamSite.
   - Salespeople will be able to execute each step of the company sales process.
   - Learners will be able to successfully complete common word processing tasks using Microsoft Word.
   - Administrators will be able to redact documents using Adobe Acrobat.
   - Employees will learn to identify and avoid disrespectful behaviour in the workplace.

Learning Objectives support the learning goals.

A learning objective describes a learner behaviour that indicates the learner has met the learning goal. A learning goal is supported by a collection of learning objectives; the exact number depends upon the course length and content complexity.   An eLearning course may have four to six learning objectives. A year-long instructor led course may have considerably more.

Mager's Theory of Behavioral Objectives states that each learning objective has three components:

1. There is a behaviour that is specific and can be observed by a hypothetical third party.
2. The conditions under which the behaviour is to take place are stated, including necessary tools or assistance to be provided.
3. The standard of performance needed is stated.

The foregoing is the ideal, and acceptable learning objectives can be formulated without strict adherence to all three points above. For example, if conditions are not stated they are usually understood to mean workplace conditions. That said, in my opinion the most important of the three is the first: the behaviour is specific and can be observed. In other words it can be measured by a third party.

Crafting a description of a behaviour that can be measured (in other words a learning objective) takes some thought. It starts with selection of the correct verb. For example, consider the following learning objectives:

Salespeople will:

- Understand how to use the company web conferencing application
- Know how create a presentation
- Use web conferences to generate sales leads

All three are poor learning objectives.

They do not describe observable behaviours.   How would a third party know if a salesperson understood how to use the web conferencing application? What does it mean "to know how to talk to create a presentation"?   What constitutes "use of web conferences to generate sales leads"?

In fact, each of the foregoing learning objectives could be better stated as a different learning goal for its own course.   For example the first one, if it was re-worked as a learning goal, could be easily be supported by a series of measurable objectives as follows:

Salespeople will be able to:

- Schedule a web conference and send successfully send email invitations
- Upload a presentation to the web conference application
- Test, adjust, and troubleshoot the audio connection
- Move backwards and forwards through the presentation during the web conference
- Demonstrate acceptable voice tone, pacing, and diction during the web conference
- Answer questions during the web conference using proper web conference functionality

There could be more learning objectives added to the list, but the key point is that they are all measurable, and they all use verbs that promote measurability:

- Schedule
- Upload
- Test
- Move
- Demonstrate
- Answer

Poor learning objectives use vague verbs such as: understand, know, appreciate, learn about, etc.

To write proper learning objectives follow this two step process:

1. Identify exactly what the learner must do in terms of behaviours to meet the learning goal.

2. Use appropriate verbs to craft those behaviours into learning objectives.

Here's a [list of appropriate verbs for learning objectives](#) to help get you started.