

Instruction in Libraries and Information Centers

Establishing learning goals and outcomes

What is backward design?

Backward Design is an approach to instructional design that shifts the focus from content and teaching to outcomes and learning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) with three stages:

1. Identify desired results
2. Determine acceptable evidence
3. Plan learning experiences and instruction

How to write learning goals?

Learning goals should be developed as the first stage of the Backward Design process and:

- Clearly identify what a learner will know, understand, or be able to do by the end of a session.
- Be appropriate to the audience and time frame of the lesson.
- Be measurable.

Example learning goals:

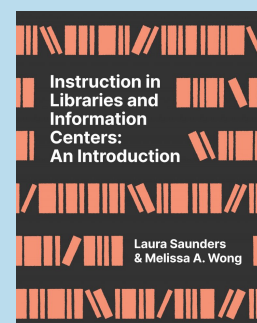
- Apply Boolean search strategies effectively to broaden and narrow searches
- Evaluate websites for authority, reliability, and accuracy; identify trustworthy sites.
- Describe how information is parsed and stored in a database.
- Define primary, secondary, and tertiary sources; identify examples of each.

Helpful Tips

- ✓ Consider the long-term needs and personal goals of learners, rather than just the short-term goals of an assignment or task
- ✓ Draw on Bloom's Taxonomy or other frameworks to determine the appropriate level of learning and to find verbs to convey the actions relevant to that level.
- ✓ Use active verbs when writing learning goals such as "examine," "analyze," "discuss," or "create"
- ✗ Avoid verbs that are vague or difficult to measure such as "understand," "know" and "be familiar with."

Learn more!

Access additional information about writing effective learning goals, engaging in the next steps of the backward design process, and examples of full lesson plans in the open access textbook, [*Instruction in Libraries and Information Centers: An Introduction*](#) by Laura Saunders and Melissa A. Wong.



Sources

Saunders, Laura and Wong, Melissa. *Instruction in Libraries and Information Centers: An Introduction*. Windsor & Downs, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.21900/wd.12>

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. ASCD.

Simmons
UNIVERSITY

Center for Information
Literacy

WWW.SIMMONS.EDU/SCIL
scil@simmons.edu

© 2025. This work is openly licensed via [CC BY-NC 4.0](#)