



4) Putting It All Together

Now that we've brushed up on **Bloom's Taxonomy**, **measurable objectives**, and **assessment**, we're ready to put them into your syllabi.

First, look at each of your existing objectives and ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) Does it state a clear goal, with a measurable skill or demonstrated ability attached to it?
- 2) Does it coincide with one or more of Bloom's higher levels of thinking?
- 3) Is it appropriate for the kind of course it is (online, hybrid, or face-to-face)?

If you can answer yes to all of these, then you're on the right track.

Once you've laid the groundwork for your syllabus,

you can start getting creative with assessment. Try to think outside the lecture-and-exam formula; consider portfolios, case studies, and problem-based learning.

Now go spice up your syllabus!

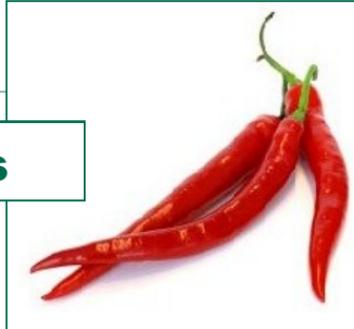
LINKS AND RESOURCES

- **Bloom's Taxonomy (Mary Forehand, University of Georgia)** [LINK](#)
- **"Writing Objectives Using Bloom" (UNC-Charlotte Center for Teaching & Learning)** [LINK](#)
- **"Assessment of Student Learning" (University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching)** [LINK](#)
- **RubiStar Rubric Creator (rubistar.4teachers.org)**
- **Stanford University Center for Teaching and Learning (ctl.stanford.edu/)**



SPICING Up Your Syllabus

In 4 Easy Steps



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is an easy "how-to" guide on bringing your syllabus to the next level of clarity and rigor. By focusing on four areas of basic course design, this guide will help you quickly and easily transform your existing syllabi into the envy of the aca-

demic world, all in four easy steps:

- 1) Bloom's New Taxonomy
- 2) Measurable Objectives
- 3) Assessments
- 4) Putting It All Together

1) Bloom's New Taxonomy



For those of you who are totally unfamiliar with Bloom's Taxonomy in any way, shape, or form, here is a simple definition:

Bloom's Taxonomy is a way of defining higher and lower levels of critical thinking.

In other words, Bloom recognizes that coming up with new techniques for heart surgery is a **higher order of critical thinking** than, say, memorizing the multiplication tables. Both involve thinking; one is just more rigorous than the other.

But Bloom's NEW Taxonomy, you say? Don't worry, it's not too different from the "old" version. The overall ideas are roughly the same; the words have just been retooled to fit today's educational theories more closely (see **chart**).

For educators, Bloom's Taxonomy can help in challenging students on different levels. For a short homework assignment, maybe you just want your students to **remember** or **understand** something; a longer homework assignment might ask students to **apply** knowledge. For a final exam or class objective, however, you probably want your students to **analyze**, **evaluate**, or **create**.

2) Measurable Objectives



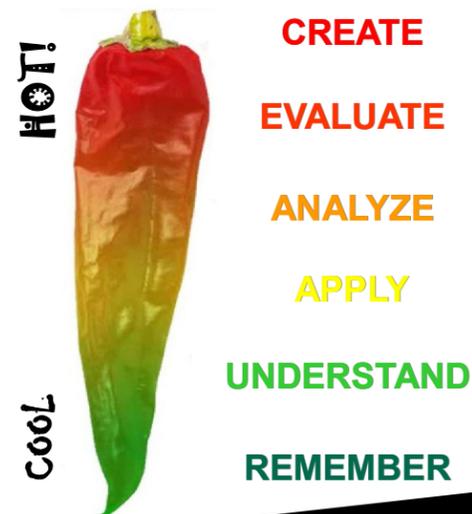
Objectives are great—heck, they're necessary! But not all objectives are created equal. Take the following two examples:

- 1) All students will be able to master basic writing skills.
- 2) All students will be able to master basic writing skills by creating a self-help guide for ELL students in the areas of sentence structure, diction, and punctuation.

Notice anything about the second one? Of course, it's longer—but it's longer because it includes a clear expectation of how to **measure** student success. Without that, the objective would be too ambiguous. What does it mean to "master basic writing skills"? The second objective gives us an idea.

Furthermore, you should always think of your objectives in terms of Bloom. The second example clearly engages the **create** level, but it also requires students to **remember**, **understand**, **apply**, and **analyze** to get there. Wow, that's a lot of Bloom!

BLOOM'S NEW TAXONOMY



3) Assessment



Good objectives and assessments go hand-in-hand. And by having objectives that ask students to **demonstrate their understanding** in some way, assessment is already in the works.

Assessments should allow students to show real, cumulative progress—and engage them in higher levels of thinking. In other words, how have they grown, and how can they show it in a meaningful way?

Look at the **Assessment Learning Cycle**

chart shown below. It provides a roadmap for how assessment should coincide with objectives, with one always improving the other.

First, you **define the intended learning objectives** for the course—that is, what should students learn?

Next, you **measure selected learning outcomes** by assessing student growth with things like projects, exams, essays, and portfolios.

Then, you **compare their learning outcomes with the course's intended objectives**. In other words, how well have students achieved the goals of the course?

And finally, you use student learning outcomes to **redesign the program to improve learning** overall.

Assessment Learning Cycle

