Goals and Objectives

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This section about creating your course goals and learning objectives is probably the most important piece of the faculty institute. As has been previously mentioned, these elements provide the framework of your entire course. Investing a bit of time to create clear and measurable objectives will save you time in course development and produce a better course.

Objectives

- State the overall goals of your course
- List the steps (objectives) students will need to take to reach the goals

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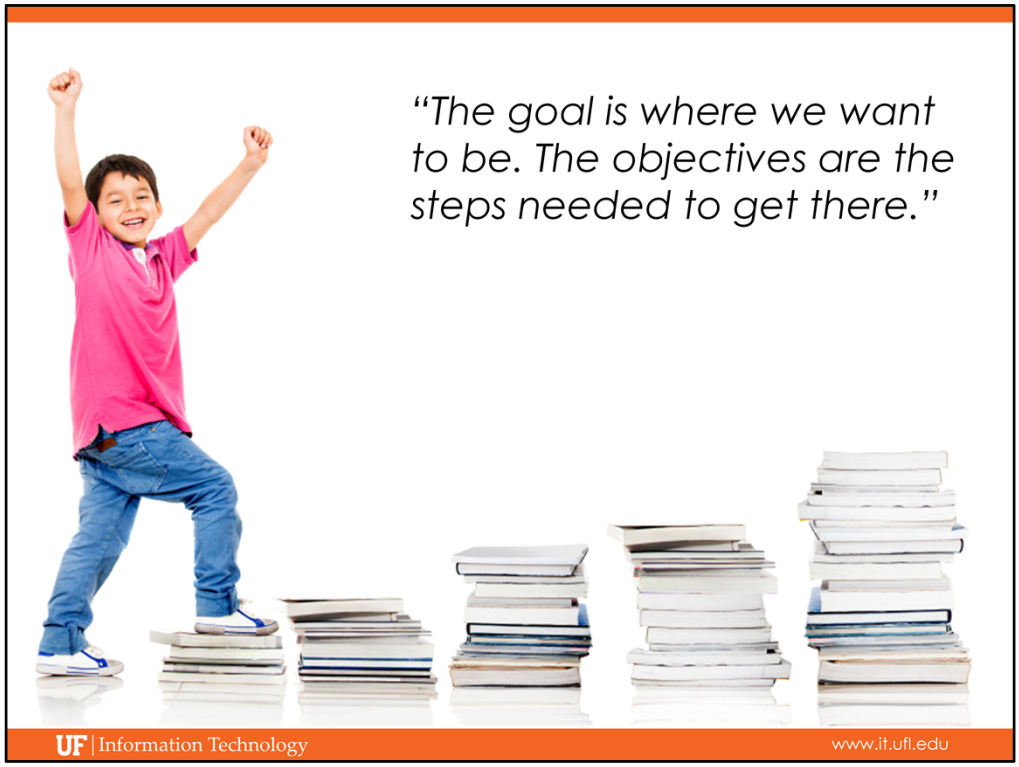
When you have finished viewing the module 3 presentations, you should be able to write a clear course goal and the objectives that will support that goal.



Goals are broad, intangible, abstract, and can't be validated. Your overall course goal may already exist within the catalogue course description. Your course may have several large goals. These will describe what the student will be able to do after completing the course. Objectives are narrow, precise, tangible, concrete, and can be measured.

"The goal is where we want to be. The objectives are the steps needed to get there."

AST1001: Introduction to Astronomy

The goal of AST 1001: Introduction to Astronomy is to understand how the universe and all its contents began, have developed, and will end--and to appreciate our place in the cosmos.

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Let's look at an example: The goal of AST 1001: Introduction to Astronomy is to understand how the universe and all its contents began, have developed, and will end--and to appreciate our place in the cosmos.

This is an overarching goal that covers a lot of ground. Understanding all of these aspects of the goal will definitely require a semester of work! Remember that we mentioned that goals cannot be validated. Notice that we have used the term "understand." If you think about it, it really is not possible to know if someone "understands" something.

What is a Learning Objective?

- Who
- Condition
- Performance
- Criteria

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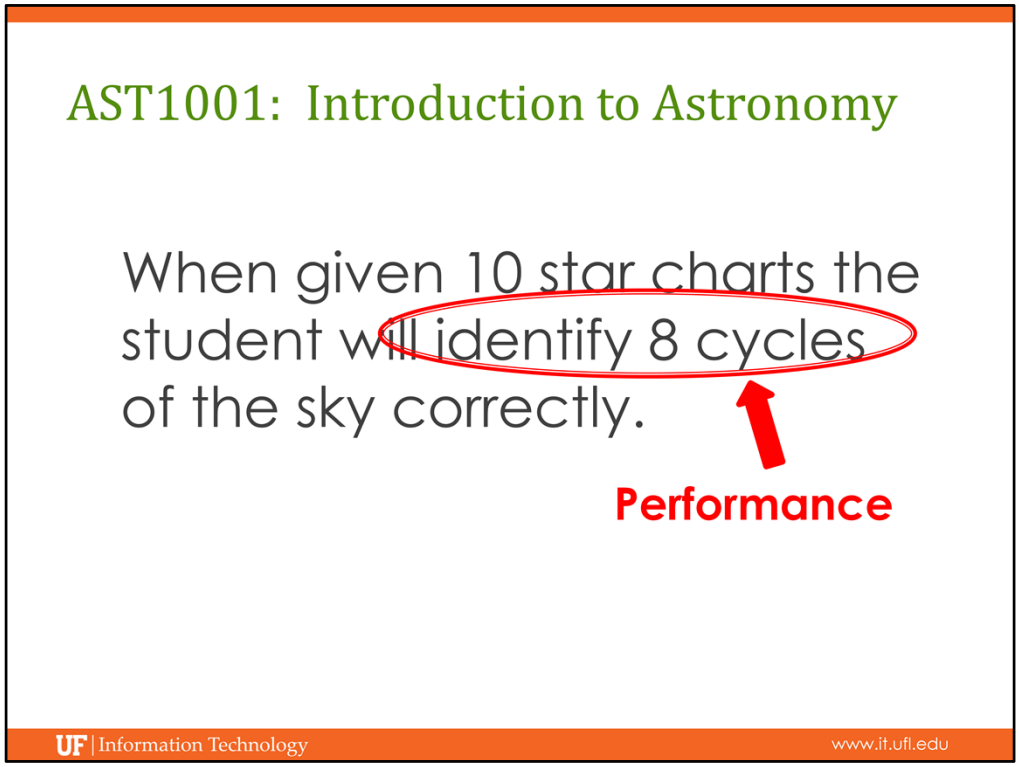
The goal- seems pretty straight forward, doesn't it? Now let's look at Learning Objectives. A well-written learning objective has four parts: The "who" centers on the student. The "condition" describes the conditions under which the student must perform the task.

The "performance" indicates an observable outcome. Note that we said "observable" outcome. The outcome has to be something that you can see and measure. In the previous slide we mentioned that you cannot validate whether someone "understands" something or not. However, you can generally infer that someone "understands" something if they can do something with the information. This is where we focus most of our energy when writing the objectives

Finally, the "criteria" describes the expectations and how the performance will be assessed.



In our sample course, we will want the student to identify 8 cycles of the sky. To support this objective, we are going to provide the student with 10 star charts. And we expect the student to identify 8 cycles of the sky correctly. There are some situations, where it may not be necessary for a student to complete the task at 100% in order to be successful. In such cases, you can include that as part of your objective.

Just as this scaffolding serves to support the construction of this building, you'll want to create learning objectives that outline the things students will need to be able to do to reach the overall course goals. This may mean that you have between 5 – 15 objectives for each module, chapter or unit.

Why use learning objectives?

- Organize material
- Determine learning strategies
- Allows for instructional design assistance

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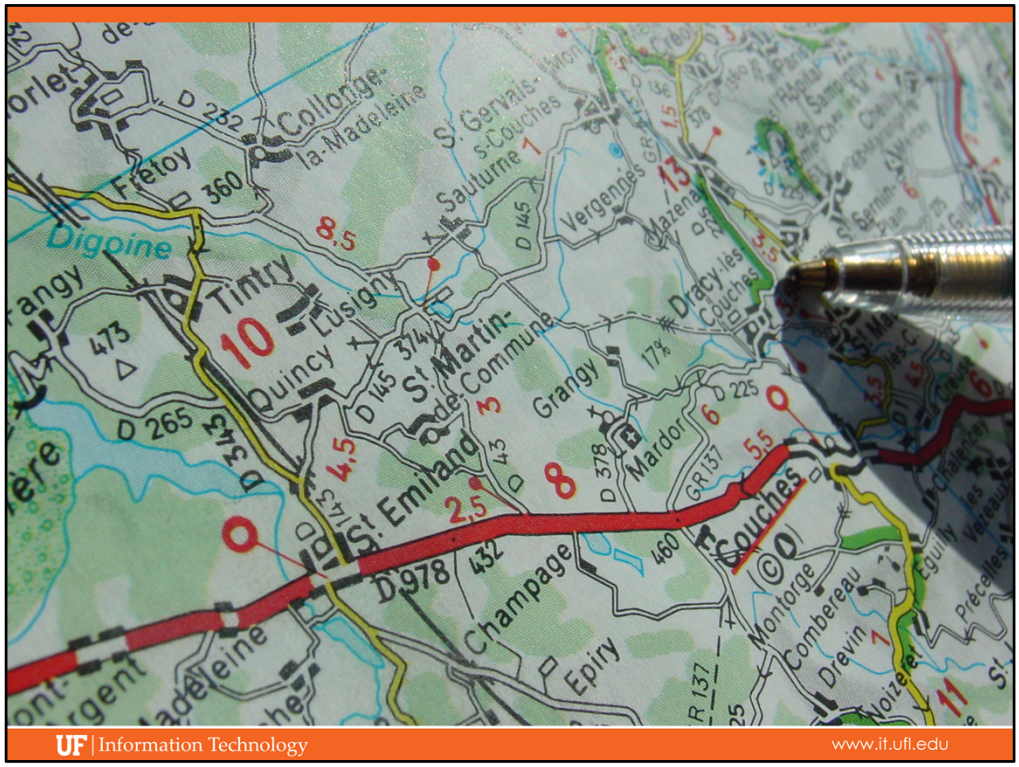
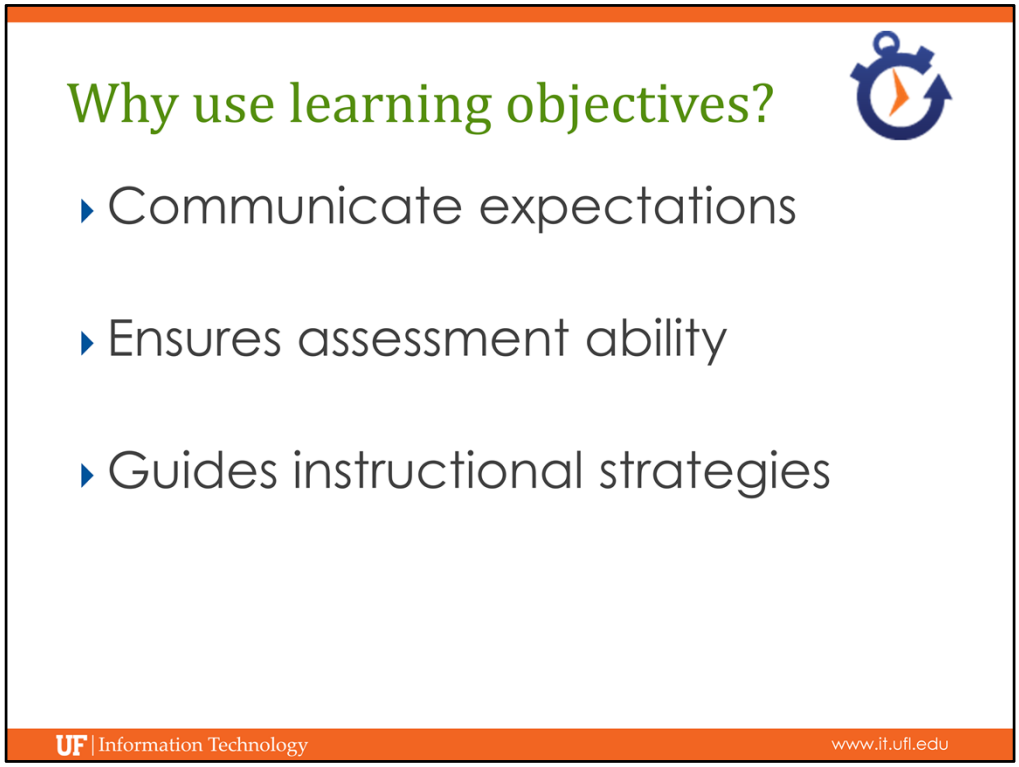
So you might be thinking, "I don't have time to write the objectives for my entire course." And it may seem like a time consuming task. But, once you get started, you'll probably find that you can write them pretty quickly. And actually, creating your learning objectives before you develop your course is a time saver.

Your learning objectives will help you to organize your course material and determine the best way for the students to retain the information. You'll find that when you have a good set of objectives, the rest of the course will literally flow from those objectives.

The learning objectives are the starting blocks for course design.



Your instructional designer can use these objectives as a roadmap to suggest assignments, assessments, resources and appropriate technologies.



As far as your course design goes, the learning objectives will let your students know exactly what you expect them to be able to do.

It will guide your assessment plan by specifying what and how you will assess student success.

And finally, well-written learning objectives can ensure that your overall course goals will be met. They'll make it easier for you to edit and reuse content. They'll also help you eliminate extraneous material that can cause student frustration.

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