

## VERBS AND COMPETENCY STATEMENTS<sup>1</sup>

Verbs should be specific and active (e.g., “writes” rather than “responsible for”). The verb should have an object (e.g., “writes reports”). Unless the purpose of the task is obvious, the statement should say why the task is done, or what is supposed to be accomplished by the completion of the task (e.g., “writes reports to summarize new enrollment procedures for students and faculty”).

### VERBS TO USE

**Account:** to give a report on; to furnish a justifying analysis or explanation

**Act:** to perform a specified function

**Adjust:** to bring to a more satisfactory state; to bring the parts of something to a true or more effective position

**Advise:** to recommend a course of action; to offer an informed opinion based on specialized knowledge

**Answer:** to speak or write in reply

**Appraise:** to give an expert judgment of worth or merit

**Approve:** to accept as satisfactory; to exercise final authority with regard to commitment of resources

**Arrange:** to prepare for an event; to put in proper order

**Assemble:** to collect or gather together in a predetermined order from various sources

**Assign:** to specify or designate tasks or duties to be performed by others

**Assist:** to help or aid others in the performance of work

**Attain:** to come into possession of; to arrive at

**Attend:** to be present

**Audit:** to examine officially with intent to verify

**Authorize:** to approve; to empower through vested authority

**Budget:** to plan expenditures

**Build:** to construct

**Calculate:** to make a mathematical computation

**Call:** to communicate with by telephone; to summon; to announce

**Circulate:** to pass from person to person or place to place

**Code:** to put into words or symbols used to represent words

**Collaborate:** to work jointly with; to cooperate with others

**Collect:** to gather

**Communicate:** to impart a verbal or written message; to transmit information

**Compare:** to examine for the purpose of discovering resemblances or differences

**Compile:** to put together information; to collect from other documents

**Compute:** to determine or calculate mathematically

**Confirm:** to give approval to; to assure the validity of

**Consolidate:** to bring together

**Construct:** to make or form by combining parts; to draw with suitable instruments and under specified conditions

**Consult:** to seek advice of others; to give professional advice or services

**Contact:** to communicate with

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Guide for Writing Functional Competencies (2005, October). Retrieved August 8, 2016 at <https://sph.uth.edu/content/uploads/2012/01/Competencies-and-Learning-Objectives.pdf>

**Control:** to measure, interpret, and evaluate actions for conformance with plans or desired results

**Coordinate:** to regulate, adjust, or combine the actions of others to attain harmony

**Correct:** to make or set right; to alter or adjust to conform to a standard

**Create:** to bring into existence; to produce through imaginative skill

**Delegate:** to commission another to perform tasks or duties, which may carry specific degrees of accountability and authority

**Design:** to conceive, create, and execute according to plan

**Develop:** to disclose, discover, perfect, or unfold a plan or idea

**Direct:** to guide work operations through the establishment of objectives, policies, rules, practices, methods, and standards

**Distribute:** to deliver to proper destination

**Divert:** to turn from one course or use to another

**Eliminate:** to get rid of; to set aside as unimportant

**Encourage:** to inspire with spirit, hope; to give help or patronage to

**Enlist:** to engage for duty; to secure the support and aid of

**Estimate:** to forecast future requirements

**Evaluate:** to determine or fix the value of

**Expedite:** to accelerate the process or progress of

**Gather:** to collect; to harvest; to accumulate and place in order

**Generate:** to bring into existence; to originate by vital or chemical process

**Guarantee:** to secure; to answer for the debt, default, or miscarriage of

**Help:** to be of use to; to relieve; to remedy; to serve

**Identify:** to establish the identity of; to associate with some interest

**Improve:** to make something better

**Inform:** to make known

**Initiate:** to start; to introduce; to originate

**Install:** to place in office; to establish in an indicated place, condition, or status; to set up for use in service

**Instruct:** to teach

**Interpret:** to give the meaning of; to explain to others

**Interview:** to obtain facts or opinions through inquiry or examination or various sources

**Inventory:** to catalog or to count and list

**Investigate:** to observe or study by close examination and systematic inquiry

**Issue:** to put forth or to distribute officially

**Justify:** to prove or show to be right or reasonable

**Lead:** to guide or direct on a course or in the direction of; to channel; to direct the operations of

**Maintain:** to keep in an existing state

**Make:** to cause to happen to; to cause to exist, occur, or appear; to create; to bring into being by forming, shaping, or altering material

**Mediate:** to interpose with parties to reconcile them; to reconcile differences

**Modify:** to make less extreme; to limit or restrict the meaning of; to make minor changes in

**Negotiate:** to confer with others with a view to reaching agreement

**Obtain:** to acquire or gain possession of

**Operate:** to perform an activity or series of activities

**Participate:** to take part in

**Permit:** to consent to; to authorize; to make possible

**Persuade:** to move by argument or entreaty to a belief, position, or course of action

**Place:** to locate and choose positions for

**Plan:** to devise or project the realization or achievement of a course of action

**Practice:** to perform or work at repeatedly in order to gain proficiency

**Prepare:** to make ready for a particular purpose

**Present:** to introduce; to bestow; to lay as a charge before the court; to offer to view  
**Process:** to subject to some special treatment; to handle in accordance with a prescribed procedure  
**Procure:** to obtain possession of; to bring about  
**Produce:** to grow; to make, bear, or yield something; to offer to view or notice; to exhibit  
**Project:** to throw forward; to present for consideration; to communicate vividly, especially to an audience  
**Propose:** to form or declare a plan or intention  
**Purchase:** to buy or procure by committing organizational funds  
**Receive:** to acquire, come into possession of  
**Recommend:** to advise or counsel a course of action; to offer or suggest for adoption  
**Reconcile:** to adjust; to restore to harmony; to make congruous  
**Reconstruct:** to rebuild; to reorganize or reestablish  
**Record:** to register; to set down in writing  
**Refer:** to send or direct for aid, treatment, information, or decision; to direct attention; to make reference to  
**Report:** to give an account of; to furnish information or data  
**Research:** to inquire specifically, using involved and critical investigations  
**Respond:** to make an answer; to show favorable reaction  
**Retrieve:** to regain; to rescue  
**Revise:** to rework in order to correct or improve; to make a new, improved, or up-to-date version  
**Schedule:** to plan a timetable; to fix time  
**Secure:** to gain possession of; to guarantee; to make safe  
**Select:** to choose the best suited  
**Send:** to dispatch by a means of communication; to convey  
**Solicit:** to approach with a request or plea; to strongly urge  
**Solve:** to find a solution for

## VERBS TO AVOID

**Appreciate:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Assists:** Not specific. Does not identify the actions of one person.  
**Become aware of:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Be familiar with:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Believe:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Clarify:** Usually indicates an enabling objective.  
**Consider:** Rarely observable. Not an action verb.  
**Enjoy:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Execute:** Vague. Another version of "Do".  
**Know:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Participate:** Not specific. Does not identify the actions of one person.  
**Processes:** Not specific  
**Relate:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.  
**Summarize:** Not an action verb.  
**Supports:** Not specific  
**Synthesize:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Understand:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.  
**Use:** Vague. Another version of „Do.“  
**Utilize:** Vague. Another version of „Do.“

## FUZZY VERBS

These verbs should be used with care. Some are only variants of the verb 'Do,' and don't convey any special meaning. Their overuse defeats the purpose of standardized verbs and results in vague, "fuzzy" task statements.

**Achieve:** This verb implies you are going to measure the product (or quality), not the process. A common mistake is to use the verb "achieve" and then to use standards that represent steps in the task rather than the quality of the outcome.

**Administer:** The use of this verb should be restricted to fairly mechanical or structured activities or to medical activities. It is not a synonym for „Manage.“

**Analyze:** One usually analyzes something in order to accomplish a real task

**Apply:** The use of "Apply" often leads to unobservable or unmeasurable task statements.

**Assess:** Difficult to observe or measure. Usually the analyst would be better off stating what the individual has to do in order to assess something.

**Check:** Checking is usually done as part of supervision or verification.

**Conduct:** The verb „Conduct“ should be used ONLY when a more precise verb does not exist. The verb "Conduct" (as well as "Perform" and other verbs that simply mean „Do“).

**Counsel:** This has the connotation of simply providing general information. The verbs "advise" and "recommend" are usually what is really meant and indicate "action."

**Demonstrate:** Like "define", "demonstrate" is usually indicative of an enabling objective.

**Describe:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.

**Discuss:** Usually indicates an enabling objective or a learning activity. Not an action verb.

**Effect:** Similar in meaning to "achieve" but more vague.

**Elucidate:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.

**Ensure:** Difficult to observe or measure. Usually the analyst would be better off stating what the individual or unit has to do in order to ensure something happens or doesn't happen.

**Evaluate:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.

**Explain:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.

**Inspect:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.

**List:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.

**Manage:** Difficult to observe or measure. One would be better off stating what the individual has to do in order to manage something. Since management is a complex set of skills, competency statement that uses the verb "manage" should be closely examined. It will often be found to be so broad that it must be split into several more well-defined tasks.

**Monitor:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.

**Name:** Nearly always indicates an enabling objective

**Orchestrate:** To organize, manage, or arrange.

**Oversee:** To watch over and direct.

**Perform:** "Perform", like "conduct", is simply another way of saying "do."

**Prioritize:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.

**Review:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.