

Linguistic Scaffolds for Writing Effective Language Objectives

An effectively written language objective:

- Stems from the linguistic demands of a standards-based lesson task
- Focuses on high-leverage language that will serve students in other contexts
- Uses active verbs to name functions/purposes for using language in a specific student task
- Specifies target language necessary to complete the task
- Emphasizes development of expressive language skills, speaking and writing, without neglecting listening and reading

Sample language objectives:

Students will **articulate** main idea and details using **target vocabulary: topic, main idea, detail**.

Students will **describe** a character's emotions using **precise adjectives**.

Students will **revise** a paragraph using correct **present tense and conditional verbs**.

Students will **report** a group consensus using **past tense citation verbs: determined, concluded**.

Students will use **present tense persuasive verbs** to **defend** a position: **maintain, contend**.

Language Objective Frames:

Students will (function: active verb phrase) using (language target).

Students will use (language target) to (function: active verb phrase).

Active Verb Bank to Name Functions for Expressive Language Tasks

articulate	defend	express	narrate	share
ask	define	identify	predict	state
compose	describe	justify	react to	summarize
compare	discuss	label	read	rephrase
contrast	elaborate	list	recite	revise
debate	explain	name	respond	write

Language objectives are most effectively communicated with verb phrases such as the following:

Students will **point out similarities between...**

Students will **express agreement...**

Students will **articulate events in sequence...**

Students will **state opinions about...**

Sample Noun Phrases Specifying Language Targets

academic vocabulary	complete sentences	subject verb agreement
precise adjectives	complex sentences	personal pronouns
citation verbs	clarifying questions	past-tense verbs
noun phrases	prepositional phrases	gerunds (verb + ing)

Language Objectives with Expressive Verbs and Specified Language Targets

Related to Reading Standards:

Students will...

- make predictions using future tense, and text feature vocabulary (e.g. headings, captions).
- formulate pre-reading questions using appropriate question structure.
- articulate main idea and details using key vocabulary: main idea, detail.
- prioritize arguments in a text using target adjectives: important, essential, significant.
- specify bias in a text by identifying adjectives and opinions.
- articulate cause and effect relationships within a thinking map using subordinating conjunctions: since, because, when.
- describe a character's emotions using precise adjectives.
- retell a narrative story using past tense verbs and adverbs of time (e.g. the next day, later that week)
- read text passages containing target vocabulary with prosody
- ask and answer "how" questions about main events using the past-tense.

Related to Writing Standards:

Students will...

- express an opinion in a topic sentence for a persuasive paragraph using strong verbs.
- write a persuasive paragraph using correct present and conditional verb tenses.
- articulate a position using strong present tense verbs: support, maintain, contend, believe.
- qualify a position using adverbs: agree/disagree...somewhat, entirely, absolutely, completely
- justify a position using relevant details and complete sentences.
- develop a supporting detail using complete and varied sentences.
- replace everyday vocabulary with precise word choices.
- write a personal narrative using regular and irregular past-tense verbs.
- provide anecdotes to support a point using regular and irregular past-tense verbs.
- summarize a non-fiction text using general present tense and citation verbs.
- revise sentence fragments into complex sentences.
- write habitual present tense sentences about a classmate's routines using correct pronouns and subject verb agreement.
- provide cohesion between sentences in exposition with appropriate transitional expressions.
- compose complex and simple sentences to support points in expository and persuasive writing.
- utilize precise word choices to convey actions, feelings, descriptors in narrative writing.
- utilize vocabulary, syntax and grammar reflective of academic register within writing.
- edit final drafts of sentences and paragraphs for appropriate tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun reference, fragments and run-on sentences.

Related to Classroom Discussion (Listening and Speaking):

Students will...

- restate a partner's response using paraphrasing expressions (e.g. so what you are saying is)
- listen for and point out similarities in ideas using target language: My idea is similar to/builds upon.
- report a group consensus using past-tense citation verbs: determined, concluded.
- articulate a perspective using strong present tense verbs: believe, agree/disagree, support
- analyze word parts to determine meaning using precise terms: prefix, suffix, root word
- define the unit concept stereotype using complete sentences and target vocabulary.
- listen for and record precise adjectives used by classmates to describe a character's reactions.