

How to Write a Statement of Objectives

Where does it fit? – The statement of objectives is often included in the introduction section, but some documents require a separate statement of objectives section. In all cases, the document's objectives should be introduced by the title of the document.

Before Writing – Clearly articulating the objectives of your document is essential to realize your purpose in writing. Clear articulation the document's objectives requires that you are aware of your audience, and you must always make sure the reader understands the relevance of each portion of your document to its objectives. Carefully consider each of the following issues before you craft the statement of objectives.

- **Message** – Who will read your document and why will they read it? What does your audience care about? What are you trying to persuade them to do?
- **Content** – What evidence will convince your audience to take the actions you want them to take? What level of detail needs to be presented to persuade your audience to accept your argument?
- **Style** – Is your audience expecting to be informed or entertained? Should you use simple or complex sentences and formal or informal language? Are contractions, jargon or slang acceptable?

While Writing – The statement of objectives is a clear, concise summary of exactly what you set out to achieve and why. Consider the following points to ensure the objectives are stated using clear, precise language.

- **Explicit statements of each objective** – A common mistake is to implicitly state the objectives when introducing the content of the document. Use explicit wording such as 'The objective of this investigation is to ...'
- **Parallel statements of each objective** – When a document has multiple objectives, each should be presented as part of a list with consistent grammar, punctuation and numbering. Include an appropriate key word that focuses on the primary activity needed to achieve the objective.
 - a. If you need to determine a value experimentally, use 'The objective of this investigation is to measure...'
 - b. If you need to predict the performance of a system or device, use 'The objective of this investigation is to model...'
 - c. If you need to determine a value analytically, use 'The objective of this investigation is to calculate...'
 - d. If you need to decide on a course of action, use 'The objective of this investigation is to determine whether to...'
- **Matching objectives and conclusions** – Each objective needs to be matched with a conclusion, so it is useful to list the objective/conclusion pairs when writing the statement of objectives.

After Writing – Consider the following questions after completing a draft of the document, and use these considerations to revise and improve the statement of objectives.

- Can a reader list the all objectives of the document after reading only the statement of objectives?
- Does a reader have a clear understanding of what motivated you to write the document and what information and results are available in the document?
- Is each conclusion reached matched with an explicitly stated objective?