

Research Objectives: Action Verbs

Reference Guide

Overview

Research objectives should use clear, measurable action verbs that specify exactly what will be accomplished in your study. The verbs below are organized by cognitive level and research activity type, helping you formulate precise, evaluable research objectives for your doctoral research and academic projects.

Remembering & Understanding

Basic recall and comprehension of information.

Verb	Definition
Collect	Gather data or information systematically
Define	Provide clear meaning or explanation
Describe	Give detailed account or characterization
Identify	Recognize and name specific elements
List	Create itemized records of elements
Name	Assign labels or terminology
Recall	Retrieve information from memory
Record	Document findings or observations
Repeat	Reproduce or state again
Transcribe	Convert information into written form

Table 1: Remembering and Understanding Level Verbs

Analyzing & Examining

Breaking down information and investigating relationships.

Verb	Definition
Analyze	Examine components and their relationships
Audit	Conduct systematic review of processes
Categorize	Organize into groups or classes
Code	Assign systematic labels to data
Differentiate	Identify distinctions or differences
Diagram	Represent visually with structured drawings
Discriminate	Make fine distinctions between items
Distinguish	Recognize or perceive differences
Examine	Inspect closely or investigate thoroughly
Experiment	Test through systematic inquiry
Investigate	Conduct systematic examination
Inventory	Make complete list of items
Judge	Form evaluative opinion or assessment
Locate	Find or determine position
Measure	Determine size, quantity, or degree
Monitor	Track or observe over time

Table 2: Analysis Level Verbs

Interpreting & Applying

Making meaning from information and applying it practically.

Verb	Definition
Apply	Use knowledge in practical situations
Change	Make different or modify
Communicate	Convey information or meaning
Demonstrate	Show or prove by example
Employ	Put into use or service
Explain	Make clear or understandable
Express	Communicate or convey clearly
Illustrate	Show by example or visual representation
Incorporate	Include or integrate into a whole
Instruct	Teach or provide guidance
Interpret	Explain the meaning of something
Interview	Conduct formal conversation for information
Label	Attach descriptive names or tags
Manipulate	Handle or control with skill
Match	Pair items with similar characteristics
Operate	Perform or cause to function
Organize	Arrange in systematic order
Perform	Carry out or execute an action
Relate	Show connection or association
Solve	Find answer or resolution
Translate	Convert to different form or language
Use	Put into service or employ

Table 3: Interpretation and Application Level Verbs

Evaluating & Assessing

Making judgments based on criteria and standards.

Verb	Definition
Appraise	Make judgment of value or quality
Assess	Determine value or significance
Compare	Examine similarities and differences
Conclude	Arrive at logical end point
Conduct	Organize and carry out
Contrast	Emphasize differences or dissimilarities
Counsel	Provide advice or guidance
Criticize	Judge or evaluate critically
Debate	Discuss opposing viewpoints
Evaluate	Make judgment based on criteria
Question	Ask for information or clarification
Rate	Assign numerical or qualitative value
Review	Examine or assess again
Score	Assign numerical values to performance
Test	Try out or assess through examination

Table 4: Evaluation and Assessment Level Verbs

Creating & Developing

Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things.

Verb	Definition
Advise	Offer recommendations or counsel
Arrange	Organize or place in order
Assemble	Bring together components
Combine	Join or merge into one
Compose	Create or put together
Construct	Build or create systematically
Convert	Change from one form to another
Create	Bring into being or originate
Defend	Provide arguments in support of
Design	Plan or create intentionally
Develop	Advance or elaborate progressively
Devise	Invent or work out systematically
Discover	Find or learn something new
Dramatize	Present in dramatic form
Edit	Revise and prepare for publication
Enforce	Compel observance of rules
Estimate	Approximate value or quantity
Extend	Stretch or increase in scope
Formulate	Create systematic plan or expression
Generate	Produce or bring forth
Generalize	Draw broad conclusions from specifics
Manage	Direct or supervise
Modify	Change in form or character
Organize	Arrange in systematic structure
Outline	Present main points in order
Paraphrase	Express in different words
Plan	Formulate course of action
Practice	Perform repeatedly to develop skill
Predict	State in advance based on evidence
Prepare	Make ready beforehand
Produce	Create or bring about
Propose	Put forward for consideration
Rearrange	Change arrangement or order
Reconstruct	Build again or reorganize

Recommend	Suggest as favorable or advantageous
Revise	Alter to improve or correct
Rewrite	Write again in different way
Schedule	Arrange according to plan
Separate	Divide or break apart
Show	Display or demonstrate
Sketch	Draw or describe outline
State	Express clearly or formally
Subdivide	Divide into smaller parts
Summarize	Present concisely main points
Support	Hold up or advocate for
Tell	Relate or narrate
Underline	Mark with line underneath

Table 5: Creation and Development Level Verbs

Using These Verbs in Your Research Objectives

When writing research objectives for your doctoral thesis or academic projects:

1. **Choose verbs that match your cognitive level:** Select verbs aligned with the depth and complexity of your research (analysis for exploratory studies, evaluation for comparative studies, etc.)
2. **Ensure measurability:** Your verb should allow you to determine whether the objective has been achieved (avoid vague verbs like "understand" or "know")
3. **Combine with specifics:** Pair the verb with clear parameters, methods, or outcomes (e.g., "Analyze stakeholder perceptions of agro-tourism through semi-structured interviews")
4. **Be consistent:** Use similar verb structures and complexity levels across related objectives for clarity and coherence
5. **Match your methodology:** Ensure your chosen verbs align with your research design and methods (qualitative verbs like "explore," "examine," "interpret"; quantitative verbs like "measure," "calculate," "test")

References

- [1] Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman.
- [2] Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals*. David McKay Company.
- [3] Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

