

Top 10 UDL Tips for Developing Learning Goals

Learning goals are the foundation of any effective curriculum. Only by clarifying what we want learners to accomplish can we begin to consider what assessments, methods, and materials will be most effective.

Here are 10 tips about learning goals from a UDL perspective:

1. Convey clear goals that everyone can understand

Standards- and curricular-based goals are often written using language that is difficult to understand and unpack. Rewrite and clarify what you want your learners to achieve.

Ask yourself:

- Do my learners know what the goal means?
- Are my learners able to visualize and/or describe the desired outcome in their own words or in their own ways?

2. Share goals in multiple ways

Sharing the intended goal in many formats ensures learners continue to know what they are working toward. For example, you may state the goal out loud, have it posted virtually or physically so that everyone has access to it, include it on a handout or printable, or ask learners to record or restate the goal in their own words.

Ask yourself:

- What options do my learners have to perceive the goal?
- Do all of my learners know where to find the goals we're working toward?

3. Align goals with standards

Standards articulate what the educational community values and can be flexible enough for teachers to incorporate options for how their students may go about attaining them.

Ask yourself:

- How are my goals connected to the standards or established programs of study?
- Have I ensured the standards will be achievable in my learning environment through the selected assessments, materials, and methods?
- Are my learners aware of the standards and how they connect to the learning experiences?

4. Differentiate outcomes from means

Separating the goal from the means of attaining the goal allows for flexibility in achieving the goal. It can also help pinpoint assessment issues when measuring goals.

Ask yourself:

- How have I offered flexibility in how my learners can demonstrate mastery of the intended goal?
- What barriers are removed by offering some flexibility in the means?
- For means- or process-oriented goals, am I providing flexibility in other areas such as topic choice or choice of assistive tools?

5. Divide large goals into sub-goals or objectives

Breaking larger, long-term goals into smaller short-term goals can make the process feel obtainable. It also allows opportunities to celebrate milestones in achieving long-term goals.

Ask yourself:

- Are the goals manageable for the time period allocated?
- Have I provided learners with opportunities to create their own milestones in attaining long-term goals?

6. Consider the process as well as the end product

The process of learning can be just as valuable as the end result, and newer standards like the [Common Core State Standards](#) and the [Next Generation Science Standards](#) explicitly call out process-oriented goals.

Ask yourself:

- In what ways does my goal encourage focus on the learning skills and processes, as well as the content?
- Do my assessments emphasize process and skill knowledge as well as content knowledge?

7. Provide models and examples of excellence

Offering examples of what attainment of a goal can “look like” (or “sound like” or “feel like”) gives learners a model of what to work toward.

Ask yourself:

- Are there are opportunities for learners to know what constitutes excellence?
- Have I included models and examples in my rubric for assessment?

8. Prepare your assessment with your goals in mind

Aligning assessments to your goal or goals ensures that your assessments are measuring what you’ve intended them to measure. Make sure you’re aware of and attempt to eliminate construct-irrelevant elements within your assessments.

Ask yourself:

- Does my assessment align with what I want my students to know?
- What barriers are there in my assessment that may impact students showing what they know?

9. Include opportunities for personal connections to learning goals

Affective goals, such as developing enthusiasm for learning and an ability to self-regulate, are also important for learners to engage in the learning experience.

Ask yourself:

- In what ways does my goal allow for learners to personally relate and engage to this goal?
- Have I provided opportunities for learners to articulate their own personal learning goals?

10. Make time for reflection

We’re busy and always have a lot of curricular ground to cover in our learning environments. It’s important to pause and save some time to reflect on our goals and how our learning experiences and assessments have supported our learners in attaining those goals.

Ask yourself:

- Have I given my learners opportunities to reflect on the learning experiences and goals?
- Did I notice any barriers to attaining the goals in my assessments, materials or methods?
- What changes would I make to my goals if I were to do this again?

Additional resources around UDL and goals:

- [Understand the neuroscience that supports setting clear learning goals](#) (Source: Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age by David H. Rose, Anne Meyer, Nicole Strangman and Gabrielle Rappolt).
- [Define learning goals that promote high expectations for all learners](#) (Source: UDL Quick Tips from the ACCESS Project at Colorado State University).
- [Align your learning goals with appropriate standards by asking key questions based on the UDL Guidelines](#) (Source: New York City Department of Education)
- [Focus on the “what” rather than the “how” to reduce learning barriers](#) (Source: Maryland Learning Links).
- [Enhance learning with goals that are S.M.A.R.T.](#) (Source: Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ).
- [Design flexible learning goals that proactively plan for learner variability](#) (Source: UDL-IRN Critical Elements).
- [Engage learners by offering choice](#) (Source: Universal Design for Learning in British Columbia, page 9).
- [Communicate learning goals in multiple ways to enrich how learners understand and express them](#) (Source: CAST UDL-Guidelines Examples).
- [Build scaffolding strategies to reduce or remove learning barriers](#) (Source: Goalbook).
- [Establish learning goals that allow authentic assessment of every learner’s progress](#) (Source: UDL-IRN Instructional Planning Process).