



**SMART**

**The SMART Way to Write  
Learning Objectives**

This micro-course was created  
for the South Carolina Center  
for Child Care Career Development.



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a gold-colored pen, poised to write on a document. The document appears to be a form or a ledger with some printed text and a table. The background is a warm, yellowish light. The left side of the image is a solid yellow vertical bar.

**You will be taking notes  
as you work through  
this micro-course,**

**so you will need a  
pen and paper.**

**What do you already know about writing learning objectives?**

On your note-taking paper, **write three facts** you already know. You will come back to these facts later.





Now decide if the sentence below is true or false, then click to the next slide to check your answer.

**Learning objectives describe what the learner will be able to do by the end of the class or training.**



# TR

# UE

Learning objectives describe what the learner will be able to do by the end of the class or training.

**In other words:**

Learning objectives  
describe the  
**LEARNER'S** behavior,  
NOT the  
trainer's behavior.

**YES**

**The learner  
will be able to  
explain the  
four stages  
of child  
development.**

**NO**

**The trainer  
will present  
the four  
stages  
of child  
development.**



Again, decide if the sentence below is true or false, then click to check your answer.

**Learning objectives describe behaviors that can be seen or heard.**



# TR LIE

Learning objectives describe  
behaviors that can be seen or heard.

**Put another way:**

**In learning objectives,  
the verbs (action words)  
describe **OBSERVABLE**  
behaviors.**

YES

The learner will be able to explain the current changes to the state's child care laws.

("Explain" is observable.)

NO

The learner will be able to understand the current changes to the state's child care laws.

("Understand" is NOT observable.)

**Think about what  
you have just  
discovered about  
learning objectives.**

**Add two more facts to  
your note-taking page.  
Then continue ...**



Why write  
learning  
objectives?

Because ...



... learning objectives serve as guidelines for content, instruction, and evaluation.





The **SMART** Way  
to Write  
Learning Objectives

SMART is an  
acronym for 5  
elements that  
will help you write  
great objectives.

**S**

**M**

**T**

**A**

**R**

A woman with brown hair and bangs is looking directly at the camera. She is holding a large, orange puzzle piece in front of her face, partially obscuring it. The word "SMART" is written in red capital letters on the puzzle piece. The background is a solid yellow color.

**SMART**

**Writing **SMART** objectives is  
the foundation upon which  
you build your training.**

**The 5 elements  
will **guide your  
decisions** about  
how to develop  
your content  
and instructional  
strategies.**



The 5 SMART elements are:

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**ttainable

**R**elevant

**T**ransferable

**Write** down the  
**SMART** elements  
**now.**

**Then continue ...**



A close-up photograph of three sharpened colored pencils—green, blue, and yellow—arranged vertically. The pencils are set against a solid red background. A white rectangular box with a thin green border is centered over the pencils, containing the word "Specific" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

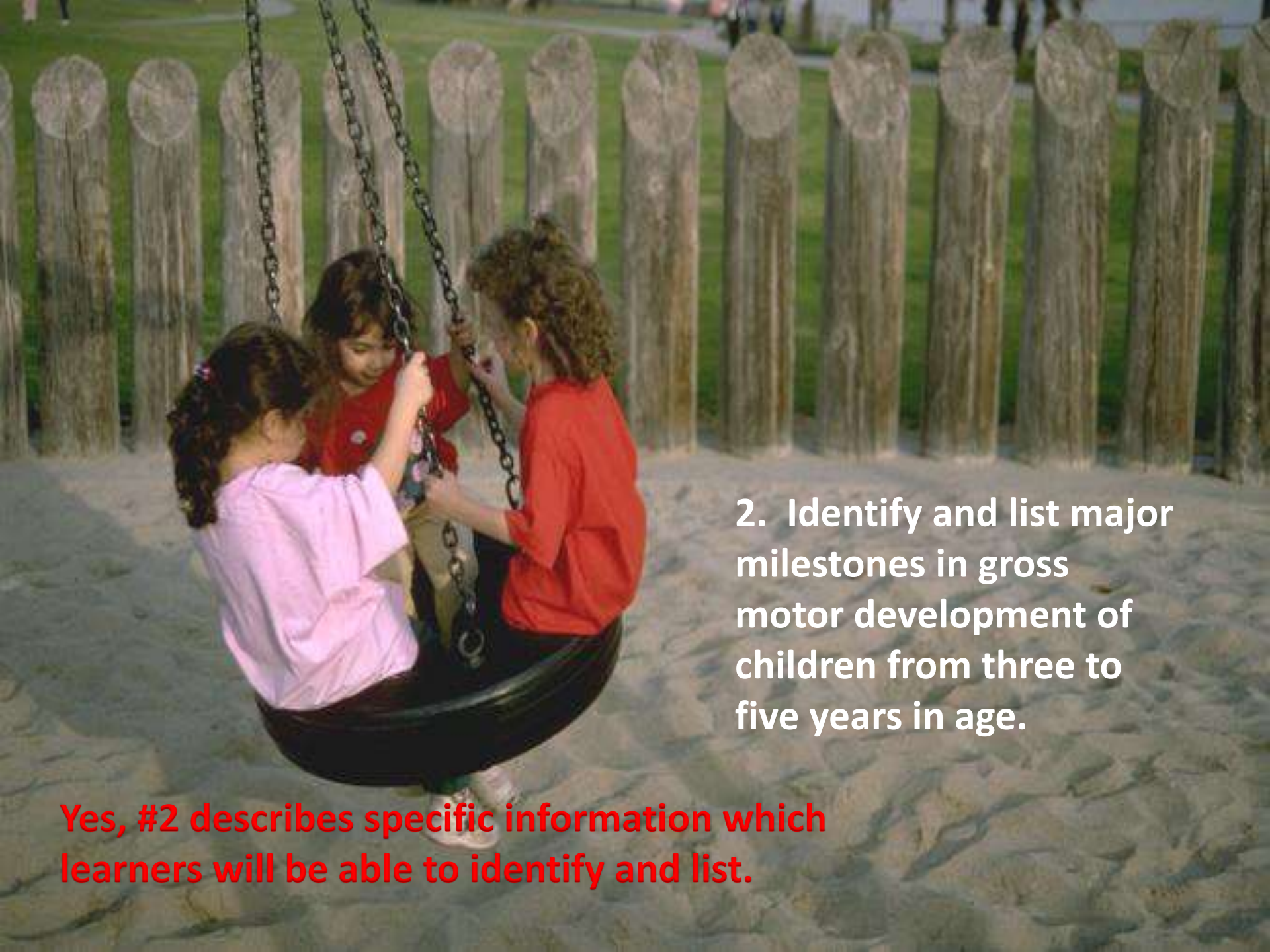
**Specific**

# Which objective is **SPECIFIC**?

1. Learn about physical development.

2. Identify and list major milestones in gross motor development of children from three to five years in age.





**2. Identify and list major milestones in gross motor development of children from three to five years in age.**

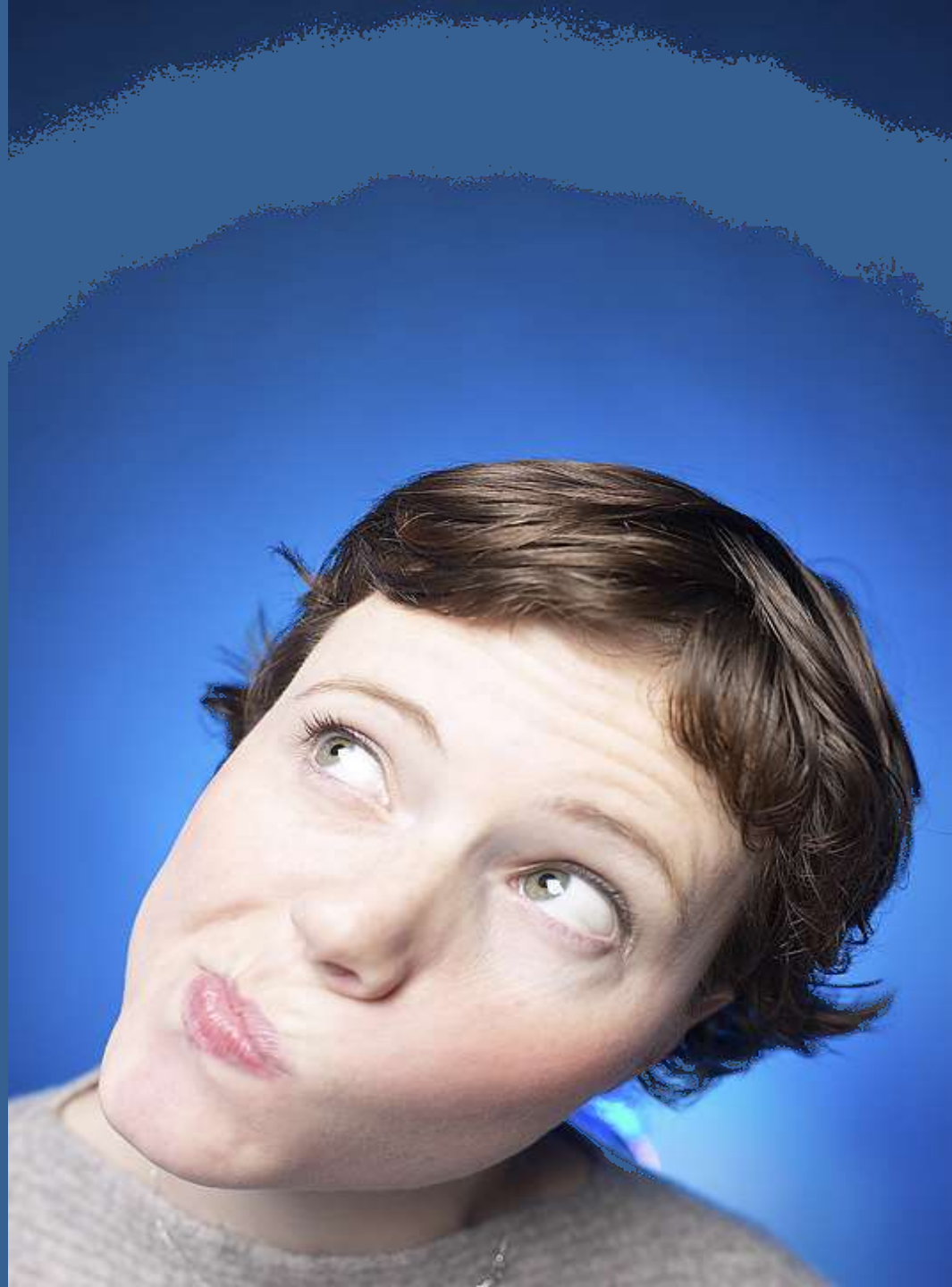
**Yes, #2 describes specific information which learners will be able to identify and list.**

A **SPECIFIC**  
learning  
objective  
describes  
**DETAILED**  
information  
rather than  
general  
information.



# Ask yourself:

Does the learning objective describe **SPECIFIC** information that the learner will acquire and be able to use?



The image features three sharpened colored pencils in green, blue, and yellow, arranged vertically. They are set against a solid red background. A white rectangular box with a thin green border is centered over the pencils, containing the word "Measurable" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

**Measurable**



Learning  
objectives  
that are  
**OBSERVABLE**  
are  
**MEASURABLE.**

**Examples of learner behaviors that are measurable are:**

**demonstrate,**

**explain,**

**identify,**

**state,**

**show,**

**do, list,**

**act, apply,**

**answer, write,**

**define, teach, model.**



Examples of learner behaviors that are measurable are:

**demonstrate,**

**explain,**

**identify,**

**state,**

**show,**

**do, list,**

**act, apply,**

**answer, write,**

**define, teach, model.**



Non-measurable behaviors are: *understand, know, learn.*  
Do **NOT** use these verbs when writing learning objectives.



**MEASURABLE**  
behaviors should  
take place **DURING**  
a class or training.

That way, you can tell if the  
learners have achieved the  
objectives.



# YES OR NO

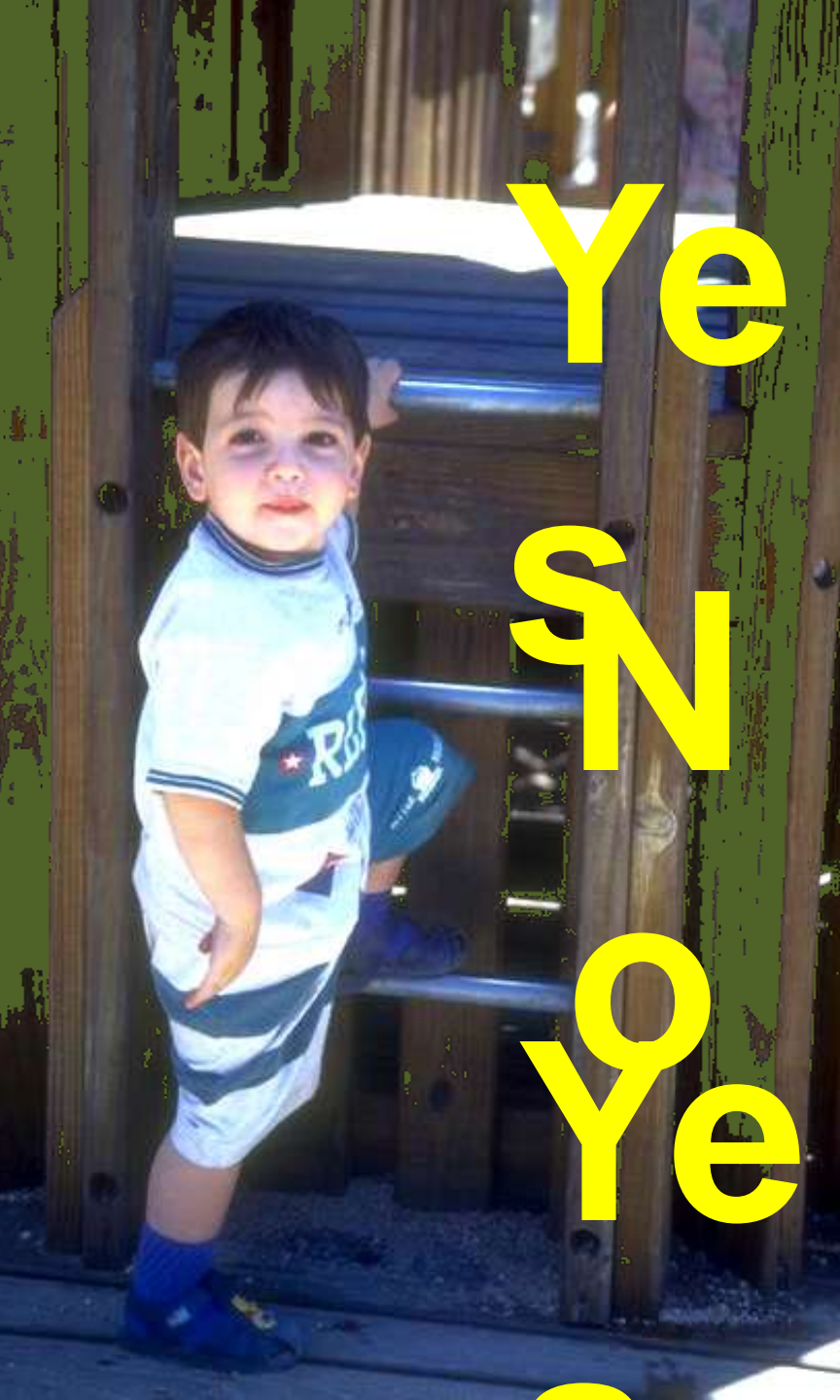
Is each learning objective  
on the next slide  
measurable?



1. The learner will be able to list three facts concerning child safety on the playground.

2. The learner will know all about playground safety.

3. The learner will be able to explain two changes to the state's child safety laws regarding playgrounds.



1. The learner will be able to **list** three facts concerning child safety on the playground.

2. The learner will **know** all about playground safety.

3. The learner will be able to **explain** two changes to the state's child safety laws regarding playgrounds.

# Ask yourself:

Can the learner demonstrate an **OBSERVABLE** skill or activity with the concepts learned?

Is the learning objective **MEASURABLE** during the training?




A close-up photograph of three sharpened colored pencils—green, blue, and yellow—arranged vertically. The pencils are sharpened to a fine point, and their wooden bodies are visible. A white rectangular box with a thin green border is superimposed over the middle of the pencils, containing the word "Attainable" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

**Attainable**

**ATTAINABLE** means  
that the learning  
objectives are  
**ACHIEVABLE** within  
the constraints of  
the classroom  
setting and time  
frame.



A close-up photograph of a mechanical watch movement. The image shows intricate gears, a balance wheel, and a portion of the watch face with numbers 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50. The background is a warm, orange-brown color.

Which learning objective below is  
**ATTAINABLE** in a 1-hour training?

1. Describe the scoring process for ECRS (Early Childhood Rating Scale).
2. Explain everything there is to know about ECRS.



**1. Describe the scoring process for ECRS (Early Childhood Rating Scale).**

**Yes, the objective above is attainable because it can be accomplished in the time frame available for the training.**


# Ask yourself:

Is the learning objective  
**ATTAINABLE** by the  
learners within the time  
and space allowed for the  
learning to take place?



A close-up photograph of three sharpened colored pencils: green, blue, and yellow. They are arranged vertically, with their tips pointing downwards. The pencils are set against a solid red background. A white rectangular box with a thin green border is centered over the middle of the pencils, containing the word "Relevant" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

**Relevant**



*Learning objectives  
are **RELEVANT** when  
they meet the training  
needs of the learners.*



When writing **RELEVANT** objectives, consider:

- ✓ the learners' **levels of education** & experience.
- ✓ the **age of children** the learners will be working with.
- ✓ the learners' **job titles** and job descriptions.

**When training a diverse group,  
make sure the learning  
objectives apply to ALL  
learners.**



**One objective below is NOT relevant during a training for teachers of infants and toddlers.**

**Which objective would you cross out?**



**1. The learner will be able to identify rules for group games.**

**2. The learner will be able to explain the importance of playing Peekaboo with infants.**



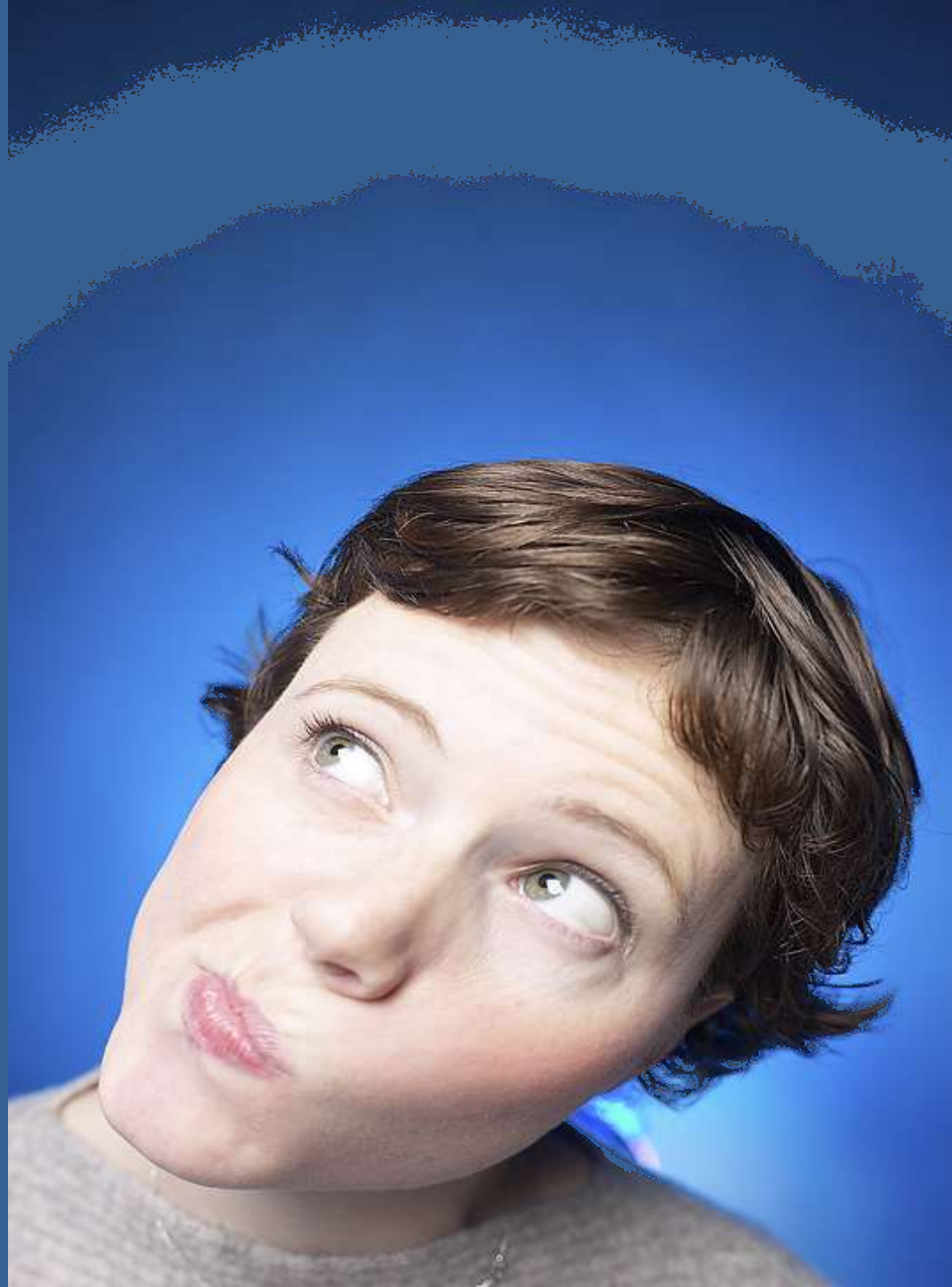
~~1. The learner will be able to identify rules for group games.~~

2. The learner will be able to explain the importance of playing Peekabo.

**Game rules are not relevant to teachers of infants and toddlers.**

**Ask yourself:**

Is the learning objective  
**RELEVANT** to the training  
needs of the learners?



A close-up photograph of three colored pencils (green, blue, and yellow) standing vertically. A white rectangular box with a green border is superimposed over the middle of the pencils, containing the word 'Transferable' in a bold, dark blue font.

**Transferable**



## TRANSFERABLE

means the learning objectives describe what learners need to **know, do, or make** that they can use when back at work.



When writing **TRANSFERABLE** objectives, consider:

- ✓ what the learner **needs to know** on the job.
- ✓ what the learner **will make during the training** to take back to the job.
- ✓ what the learner **will use from the training** when back at work.

# Which learning objective below is **TRANSFERABLE** to the workplace?



1. The learner will understand proper hand washing techniques.

2. The learner will make a visual job aid to use back at work that lists the 8 steps of proper hand washing.



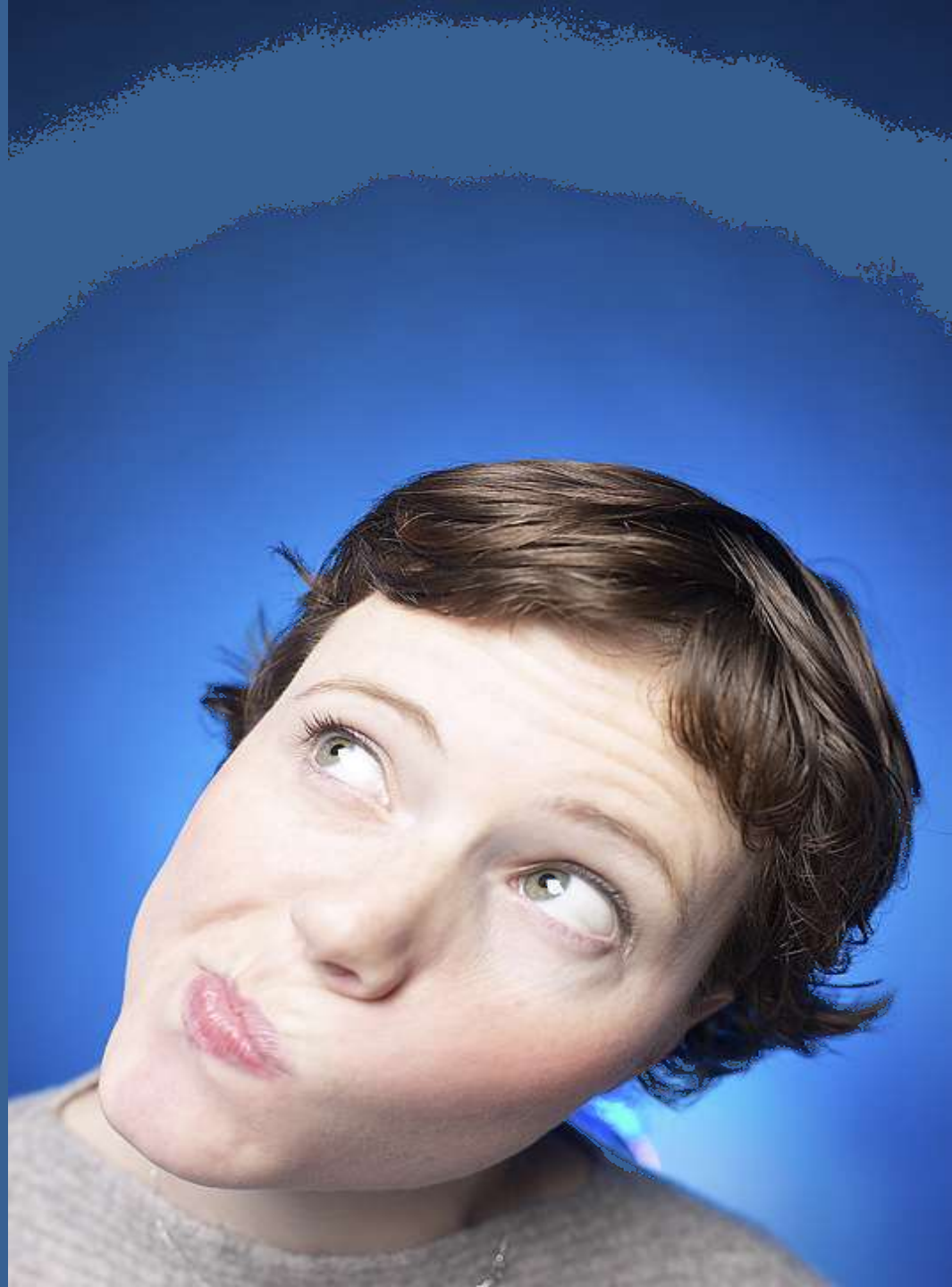
**2. The learner will make a visual job aid to use back at work that lists the 8 steps of proper hand washing.**

**Yes, #2 describes what the learner will make in the class that will be used at work.**

# Ask yourself:

Can the learner **USE** the knowledge or skills in the workplace.

Are the learning objectives **TRANSFERABLE** to the learner's job?



**Let's revisit the 5 SMART elements:**

**S** \_\_\_\_\_  
**M** \_\_\_\_\_  
**A** \_\_\_\_\_  
**R** \_\_\_\_\_  
**T** \_\_\_\_\_

**Can you verbally LIST  
them without looking at  
your notes?**

How did you do?

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ransferable

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pencil, writing on a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook is open, and the pencil is in the process of writing on one of the pages. The background is out of focus, showing more of the notebook and the hand.

Now **reread** the facts you wrote earlier about learning objectives.

Are there any facts you want to change? If yes, **rewrite** them.

**Add a statement** summarizing what you have learned about writing learning objectives.



A close-up photograph of three sharpened colored pencils standing vertically. The pencils are green, blue, and yellow from left to right. Their wooden bodies are light brown and show the texture of the wood. The colored tips are sharp and pointed. A white rectangular box with a green border is centered over the middle of the pencils, containing the text "Test Your Knowledge" in a bold, dark blue font.

**Test Your  
Knowledge**

# Is the objective below **SMART?**

The learner will be able to list five activities that will enhance the language development of a toddler.

**Yes or no? Click to check  
your answer.**



# YE

The learner will be able to list  
five activities that will  
enhance the language  
development of a toddler.

The objective is specific,  
measurable, achievable,  
relevant, and transferable.

# S M A R T

# Is the objective below **SMART?**

The learner will be able to identify all stages of the physical development of a four year old.

**Yes or no? Click to check ....**



# YE

The learner will be able to  
identify all stages of the  
physical development of a  
four year old.

# S M A R T

# Is the objective below **SMART?**

The learner will be able to understand the importance of using positive guidance with young children.

**Yes or no? Click to check ....**



# NO

The learner will be able to understand the importance of using positive guidance with young children.

How would you correct the objective above? Rewrite it, then click to read an example.



**The learner will be able to state four reasons for using positive guidance procedures with children from ages three to five.**

**The above example is one way to make the objective SMART.**

**S  
M  
A  
R  
T**

# Is the objective below **SMART?**

The learner will hear about the learning environment and curriculum for young children.

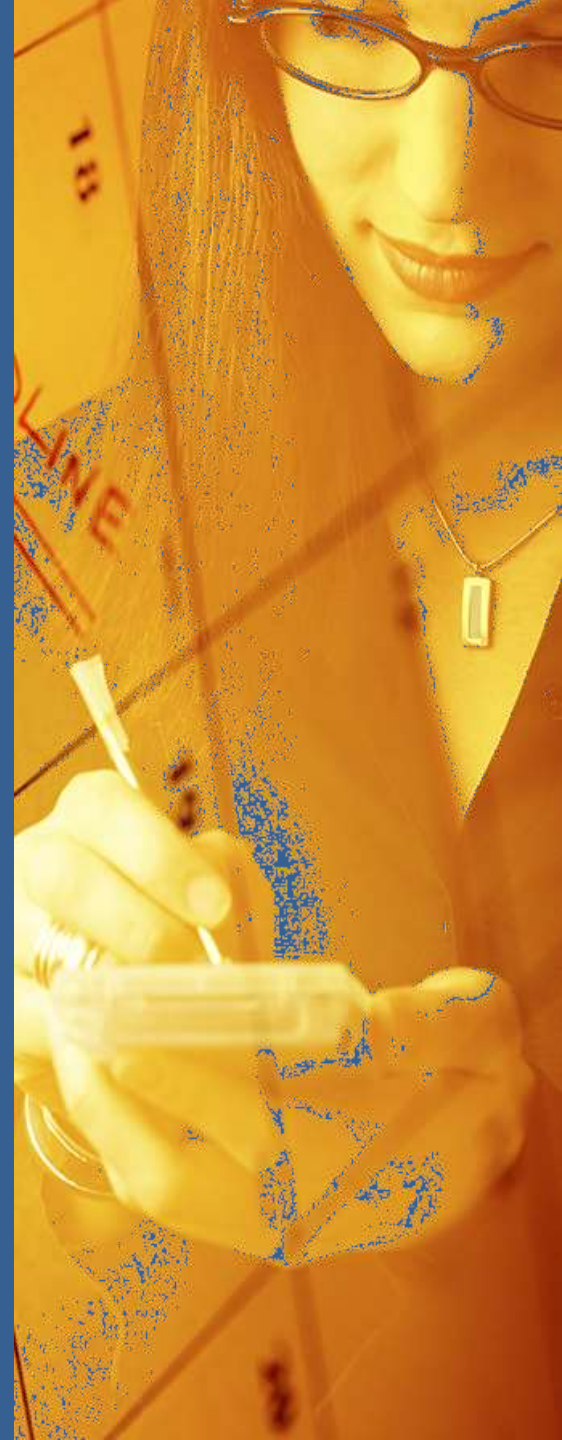
**Yes or no? Click to check ....**



# NO

The learner will hear about the learning environment and curriculum for young children.

Again, rewrite this objective correctly using the SMART elements. Click for an example ...



**The learner will be able to identify at least three elements of a positive learning environment for toddlers.**

**This is an example of making the objective SMART.**

**S  
M  
A  
R  
T**

**Rewrite the three incorrect objectives below to make them SMART:**

- 1. The training participants will learn about child growth and development.**
- 2. The instructor will cover the current changes to state laws regarding health and safety for child care centers.**
- 3. The learners will understand what young children need for good nutrition.**



# What should you do with your three corrected learning objectives from slide #68?

If you are a South Carolina CCCCD trainer, and you have completed this micro-course as part of your course requirements for **Principles of Adult Learning**, please send your three corrected learning objectives to:

**[melissa.starker@dss.sc.gov](mailto:melissa.starker@dss.sc.gov)**.

Please be sure to include your name and contact information.






Writing **SMART** learning objectives  
takes experience and lots of practice.

# The Good News!

When you write **SMART** objectives, you will be able to see a clear picture of your training outcomes.



A gravel road winds through a dense green forest, leading towards a bright blue lake in the distance. The road is light brown and curves gently to the right. The surrounding trees are lush and green, creating a canopy over the path. The sky is a pale blue, visible through the trees in the background.

**SMART objectives will be your road map  
as you write your content  
and plan your instructional strategies.**



**This slide set was created for the South Carolina  
Center for Child Care Career Development.**

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## **A Note to All Trainers** for the South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development

If you have completed this micro-course as part of your requirements for **Principles of Adult Learning**, please photocopy your **Quick Writes #3, #4, #5** and e-mail them to: [melissa.starker@dss.sc.gov](mailto:melissa.starker@dss.sc.gov) or fax them to **864-250-8690**. Be sure to include your name and contact information (email or phone number).

Special thanks from the Center for Child Care Career Development to Nancy P. Alexander for her inspiration to use the SMART elements when writing learning objectives.



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