Understanding Writing with Bloom’s Taxonomy

Led by Benjamin Bloom (1956), educational psychologists at the University of Chicago created this taxonomy for categorizing learning commonly occurring in educational settings. Their work was greatly influential in distinguishing three domains of intelligence (cognitive, affective and psychomotor), which has encouraged other research in the area of intelligence (namely, Howard Gardner).

The taxonomy provides a useful structure in which to categorize learning and the epistemology situated through writing. You’ll notice that much of the writing you assign at Antioch University relies students’ ability to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and create while at the same time using skills in remembering, understanding, and applying new ideas. The taxonomy becomes a helpful reference as faculty create and students compose writing assignments with reference to the rhetorical tasks involved in writing. It’s best to consider the taxonomy, not as a linear hierarchy, but as a fluid conceptualization of cognition.

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Revised edition by Lorin Anderson (a student of Bloom)
The taxonomy is often presented in an inverted pyramid, reflecting the most complicated cognitive tasks at the top graduating to the basics of learning. At Antioch, writers are frequently required to compose by applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Remembering and understanding are “lower level” material that have a place, certainly, but are regarded as “expected” to be included. For example, if you’re writing a paper on existentialism and psychology, including Yalom. Including quotes from Yalom only reflects that you have access to the information. Integrating aspects of group therapy reflects that you've integrated theories as relevant. Once you begin to apply Yalom's theories to a “case consult” and then analyze their effectiveness in a group dynamic, you're illustrating greater understanding. Then, let's say you evaluate /assess these approaches as helpful to your practice with geriatric clients and then combine Yalom’s theories with another theorist, you’re on your way to fully digesting material. Thus, the value and challenge of these types of writing assignments: they demand sophisticated cognitive activity, and through them you demonstrate your comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remembering</strong></td>
<td>- observation and recall of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>(prior Knowledge)</td>
<td>- knowledge of dates, events, places</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- knowledge of major ideas</td>
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<td>- mastery of subject matter</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Rhetorical Tasks</strong>: list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name</td>
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| Understanding (prior Comprehension) | - understanding information  
| | - grasp meaning  
| | - translate knowledge into new context  
| | - interpret facts, compare, contrast  
| | - order, group, infer causes  
| | - predict consequences  
| | - *Rhetorical Tasks*: summarize, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate |
| Applying | - use information  
| | - use methods, concepts, theories in new situations  
| | - solve problems using required skills or knowledge  
| | - *Rhetorical Tasks*: apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, classify |
| Analyzing       | • seeing patterns  
|                | • organization of parts  
|                | • recognition of hidden meanings  
|                | • identification of components  
|                | • *Rhetorical Tasks*: analyze, separate, order, explain, infer, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain  
| Evaluating     | • compare and discriminate between ideas  
|                | • assess value of theories, presentations  
|                | • make choices based on reasoned argument  
|                | • verify value of evidence  
|                | • recognize subjectivity  
|                | • *Rhetorical Tasks*: assess, decide, rank, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, explain, support, conclude  

Creating (prior Synthesis)

- use old ideas to create new ones
- generalize from given facts
- relate knowledge from several areas
- predict, draw conclusions
- *Rhetorical Tasks:* combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite

By Anne Maxham, Ph.D.

Director of Writing, Antioch University