Bloom's Taxonomy

When we teach something, what exactly do we want people to be able to do? In 1956, the educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom and a group of colleagues published a framework to answer this question. In 2001, Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl revised it and named the six levels with verbs: remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create. Trainers and managers use it to set clear learning goals that go beyond memory.

1. Remember

The first level is remember: recalling facts, terms and basic steps. Can the learner bring the information back from memory? Memory is the base for everything else, but it is only the beginning.

Example: In a bread-making class, the first goal is to remember: learners name the five ingredients without looking. They all can, so the class moves on.

At work: Raghad, a trainer at a telecom company, is teaching call centre staff a new billing system. Her remember goal: staff list the four main screens of the system from memory. After one short quiz, almost everyone can.

2. Understand

The second level is understand: explaining ideas in our own words. Learners can summarise, compare or give their own examples. A person who understands can say why, not only what.

Example: To check understanding, the teacher asks why the dough must rest. One learner explains in her own words that resting makes the bread soft.

At work: Raghad checks understanding: each person explains to a partner why a customer's bill went up. The answers show that two people mix up taxes and fees, so she clarifies the difference.

3. Apply

The third level is apply: using knowledge in a real or new situation. Here learners follow a procedure, solve a problem or use a tool. Many courses stop before this point, and people then struggle back at work.

Example: The learners now apply the recipe and bake the bread at home. The loaves come out well, and the skill is now theirs.

At work: Raghad moves on to apply: staff correct practice bills in a test version of the system. By the end of the day, each person fixes five bills without help.

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4. Analyse

The fourth level is analyse: breaking information into parts and seeing how they connect. Learners look for causes, patterns and differences. Analysis helps people find the real source of a problem.

Example: Two loaves come out differently, so the class analyses them step by step. Same flour, same oven, but one dough rested less, and that explains the hard loaf.

At work: Raghad gives the team three customer complaints to analyse. By comparing them, the team finds one common cause: the same discount code was applied twice.

5. Evaluate

The fifth level is evaluate: making a judgement based on clear criteria. Learners compare options, check quality and defend a decision. A good evaluation explains the reasons, not only the choice.

Example: The class evaluates two bread recipes for a guest who must eat less salt. They choose the second one and explain that it is healthier and still tasty.

At work: Raghad asks the team to evaluate two ways to fix the double discount: a refund now or a credit next month. Using cost and customer comfort as criteria, they choose the refund.

6. Create

The sixth and highest level is create: putting ideas together to make something new. Learners design, plan or produce an original solution. In the original 1956 version, this level was called synthesis and came before evaluation.

Example: Finally, the learners create their own bread: a new recipe with dates and sesame. They share it at a family dinner.

At work: As the create task, the team designs a one-page guide for handling double discounts. The guide becomes part of the training for all new staff.

Conclusion

In summary, Bloom's Taxonomy describes six levels of thinking: remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create. Each level builds on the ones below it, although real learning often moves back and forth. Good training sets clear goals at the right level and checks each one. When we aim higher than memory, people can truly use what they learn.

Sources

- Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching: Bloom's Taxonomy (Patricia Armstrong) – https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/
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