

UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT

Before starting the brainstorming process and selecting a topic, it is essential to understand the instructor's assignment prompt and requirements. A clear grasp of expectations will help you better plan the writing process, target your efforts, and produce higher-quality writing. Remember to always clarify questions with your instructor as early as possible.

Anatomy of an Assignment Prompt

Orientation: Gives background information on the writing topic to orient students to the purpose of the assignment. Your instructor may include specific ideas to help generate ideas or reference materials that has already been covered.

Task Description: This section includes details on the actual writing task, including genre, requirements, purpose, audience, and grading criteria. Once the assignment has been contextualized, the instructor will present the actual task at hand.

Tips and Strategies

1. As soon as the prompt is given, carefully read the directions 2-3 times.
2. Break the prompt down into smaller parts or sections.
3. Underline action verbs, such as analyze, compare, discuss, which tell us the purpose of the assignment.
4. Highlight expectations and requirements, such as word count and number of sources.
5. Take note of guiding questions and clues the instructor has provided to springboard your thinking.
6. Keep a copy of the prompt next to you and revisit it often as you move through the writing process.



Analyzing a Writing Prompt

1. What is the purpose of the assignment in the context of this course?
2. What is the assignment asking you to *do*? What sources do you need to consult?
3. Who is the audience?
4. What should this writing look like? What is its genre?
5. What are the instructor's rules and requirements?
6. What are the style expectations?



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