



Assignment Design

The Basics

Assignment sheets of about one page are recommended. (Clearly organize longer assignments with sections and subheadings.)

- Include a description of the task and note how students will meet course learning goals by completing the writing task.
- Be sure to include due dates, page requirements, format, and criteria for a successful paper.
- Not all writing needs to be graded. Give students opportunities to write to discover, ask questions, and summarize key points.

Consider...

Learning Outcomes for the Course or Major: Which skills do you and your colleagues most value at this point in a student's writing development?

- How might you focus an assignment on one or two of those key aspects of learning?

Student Prior Knowledge: New kinds of writing ask students to draw on and build upon—but also *adapt*—what they already know.

- Ask students to think about how the assignments you offer are different from what they have already written.
- Asking students to reflect upon one or two explicit goals for each assignment can help them to focus their energies while working through the stages of an assignment.

What is the Student Writer's Purpose?: What should the writer attempt to accomplish? How is this purpose related to prior/future assignments, or course goals?

- Be as specific as possible. Pay special attention to the action words you use: analyze, define, research, question, argue, compile, etc.

Audience: What reader is being addressed in the paper? The teacher? Readers of a particular publication or within a key community? How knowledgeable is this reader? Does this reader have a particular bias or expectation that the student needs to know about?

Process: Will the project be written in stages? (If so, describe them.) Will the student be asked to revise following your feedback or the feedback of peers?

Revision: If revision is required, how might the criteria for the draft differ from those of the final version?

Grading: How will the assignment be graded?