



# 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?