

Understanding the Assignment

In order to write a successful paper, you must first understand the assignment given by your instructor. It's worth the time to take the following steps to ensure that your paper conforms with your professor's expectations:

1. Read the assignment prompt carefully. This is something that should be done immediately, so that you know exactly what kind of time and effort the assignment will require.
2. If you are confused about a writing assignment, don't be afraid to ask your professor for a clarification. Remember that your instructor wants to see you do well and would rather not grade a paper that doesn't match the prompt.
3. Identify the different components of the prompt. Most assignments contain the following elements:
 - An overview of the topic
 - Your writing task (look for verbs like analyze, compare, connect, and explain)
 - Questions to answer and suggestions for your approach (included by the instructor to help you jump right in)
 - Style and technical specifications
4. Answer the following questions about the assignment while considering the point of view of your professor
 - What is the purpose of the assignment?
 - Who is your audience?
 - How can you support your ideas?
 - What writing style is appropriate?
5. Avoid the following approaches
 - Spending too much time on titles and cover pages
 - Using non-traditional fonts, margin, or line-spacing
 - Recycling papers that you already completed for other classes
 - Being overly creative and ambitious without acknowledging what the assignment is calling for