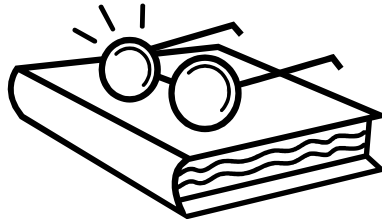


How to Read An Assignment



Below are tips to help you in reading and understanding an assignment.

When first given an assignment:

- Read the assignment carefully a couple of times.
- If you have any questions or are unclear about a part of the assignment, ask the instructor!

In the assignment, look for some hints:

- An overview
 - The instructor may give some hints to set you on the right path – follow them!
- Technical details
 - This will tell you the guidelines, such as the length and format of the paper and the due date – make sure you understand and follow these.

The next step is to interpret the assignment:

- Ask yourself the following questions and write the answers down on the assignment:
 - *Why did your instructor ask you to do this particular task?*
 - *Who is your audience?*
 - *What kind of evidence do you need to support your ideas?*
 - *What kind of writing style should you use?*
 - *What are the rules of the paper?*
 - *What is the tone of your paper? Should you be formal, informal, subjective, or objective?*
- Look for key terms:
 - Information words (who, what, when, where, why, how)
 - a. **Define:** tell the meaning of the subject
 - b. **Explain** why/how: give reasons why or examples of how something happened

- c. **Illustrate:** use descriptive examples and show how each is connected to the subject
 - d. **Summarize:** briefly list what you feel is important about the subject
 - e. **Trace:** outline how something has changed from an earlier time
 - f. **Research:** gather material from outside sources and analyze what you have found
- Relation words (demonstrate how things are connected)
 - a. **Compare:** show how two or more things are similar
 - b. **Contrast:** show how two or more things are different
 - c. **Apply:** use details to demonstrate how an idea, theory, or concept works in a certain situation
 - d. **Cause:** show how one event or series of events made something happen
 - e. **Relate:** show or describe the connections between two or more things.
 - Interpretation words (defend your own ideas about the subject – with evidence and/or support!)
 - a. **Assess:** summarize your opinion of the subject and measure it against something
 - b. **Prove, justify:** give reasons or examples to demonstrate how something is true
 - c. **Evaluate, respond:** state your opinion of the subject as good, bad, and give examples and reasons
 - d. **Support:** give reasons or evidence for something you believe
 - e. **Synthesize:** put two or more things together that you have learned about but were not put together in class
 - f. **Analyze:** determine how individual parts create or relate to the whole
 - g. **Argue:** take a side and defend it with evidence against the other side

Different types of evidence:

- **Einstein proof:** using a famous intelligent person who agrees with you to support your paper. Make sure to cite them!
- **Case proof:** using a case in which your point works or the opposite point does not work to support your paper.
- **Fact proof:** using statistics and other objective information.
- **For example proof:** using examples from the subject or text you are studying.
- *Instructors will usually tell you what kind of proof they want. Make sure you are clear about this! If you are not, then ask your instructor.*

Once you have answered the questions, found the key terms, and are fully clear about the assignment, you are ready to start working on it!