

Questions To Ask Yourself About Assignments You Give

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PURPOSE AND GOALS:

- How does the assignment further my course goals for the semester?
- Have I included my goals on the assignment?
- What do I want students to demonstrate to me in this assignment?
- What will students gain by doing this assignment?
- Will students understand what I want them to do and why?
- Have I given class time to a discussion of all of the above?

ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCES AND TIMING:

- How does the assignment relate to what comes before and after in the course?
- Am I asking students to explore the subject matter in increasingly complex ways?
- Is there a step-by-step development of skills?
- Do I give students enough time to read, research, draft, write, and rewrite?
- Will students be given class time for peer review and editing?

THE TASK ITSELF:

- Are the intellectual tasks/operations clearly denoted, e.g., compare/contrast; define; analyze cause and effect, etc.?
- What specific guidelines do students need to perform to my expectations? i.e., Length? Structure and organization? Mechanics and style? Documentation? Format? Due dates?
- Can the assignment be broken down into bulleted steps to follow?
- Are there useful strategies and helpful resources I might suggest?
- Are there some common pitfalls students should avoid?

AUDIENCE:

- If students are writing primarily for me, do they know my expectations, values, and tics?
- Would it be helpful to expand the audience beyond the teacher? To peers, for example?
- Can students identify how this assignment fits into the context of the discipline/profession?
Beyond the classroom?

GRADING:

- What constitutes a successful response to this assignment?
- How will I explain a successful response to students (e.g. show them model paper, use criteria for grading, give a rubric for “A,” “B,” “C,” failing grades)?
- Will students have a chance to evaluate themselves?
- Will students be allowed to revise?