



How to: Understand Writing Assignments

If the prompt asks you to:

1. *Define*
 - a. Specify and detail the meaning, characteristics, identify limits, or place into a category. DON'T craft an argument or discuss subjectivity.
2. *Compare & Contrast*
 - a. Consider and analyze similarities or differences. DON'T do one without the other.
3. *Analyze*
 - a. Break it down into parts to gain insight and examine it closely and in detail. DON'T give a summary or description.
4. *Explain*
 - a. Give the facts and theories objectively, provide reasons, causes, effects, implications, and ramifications. DON'T craft an argument around an explanation if the prompt only calls for you to explain.
5. *List Cause and Effect*
 - a. Analyze events or occurrences and what happened as a result. DON'T focus on summarizing; focus on evaluating.
6. *Discuss*
 - a. Explain and look at the topic in detail. Sometimes this also requires some comparisons. DON'T argue for or analyze one point of view; be objective.
7. *Summarize*
 - a. Simplify the topic to its main points, elements, or steps. DON'T just give a detailed description.
8. *Evaluate*
 - a. Make a judgement about the significance or value and support with evidence. DON'T simply explain, summarize, or compare without taking a position; while evaluation often incorporates explanation or summary, evaluation calls for a value judgement.
9. *Identify*
 - a. Name, indicate, and specify. DON'T take an argumentative position unless the prompt specifically calls for it.

If you have any more detailed questions about your prompt, schedule an appointment with the Writing Center!