



Writing Center Academic Affairs

Tips on Evaluating Assignments

Explore the Rhetorical Problem

Read the assignment.

Read the assignment carefully and well in advance of its due date.

Find key terms.

Highlight the terms that need to be explained. These will help you understand the assignment and develop an approach.

Isolate the task.

Many types of writing strategies may be required of a particular writing task. A complex essay will usually combine some of the following strategies:

- summary
- definition
- comparison
- contrast
- synthesis
- application
- interpretation
- analysis
- context
- evaluation
- support
- justification
- cause and effect

Discover implicit criteria and unexplained assumptions.

Examine a general question for clues to specific strategies. You may need to consider the type of writing that is normally done in the field.

Explore the Audience

Establish who will be reading the essay.

- Fellow students?
- Your instructor?
- A businessperson?
- A politician?
- A supervisor?

- An administrator?

Explore your audience's attitude toward your topic.

- What does the audience ... know, think, feel, expect, and/or object to?

Explore the Context

- Consider the writing context: What writing conventions are expected in the field?
- Establish the social context: Are there social conventions that affect attitudes toward your topic?
- Define the political context: Are there laws or other political realities that affect your position?
- Describe the historical context: What is the relationship of your topic with past definitions or actions?