



Student Success Series I

Ten Hints for Understanding Writing Assignments

Welcome to the ASC Student Success Series. In this series, you will be guided to enhance your success skills and strategies by reviewing helpful information. Navigating your college course requirements can be rigorous. These tips and hints are designed to help you strengthen success strategies. Read the content carefully, and take some time to reflect on the material, so you can effectively apply the skills to your current needs.

Student Success Series I focuses on how to understand your instructor's expectations for a writing assignment to ensure the assignment is completed correctly.

1. **Read the assignment carefully and follow instructions exactly.** If you do not understand something, ask your instructor as soon as possible.
2. **Establish** whether or not ideas or issues included in the assignment are related to textbook materials, an in-class video, or any other class elements connected to the task.
3. **Look for key words** to determine what your instructor is asking you to do, such as ANALYZE, SUMMARIZE, COMPARE or CONTRAST, INTERPRET, EXPLAIN, etc. Also look for assignment-related words in the instructions. For example, you might find words like HOW DID, WHAT DOES, WHY DO YOU THINK, REFLECT ON, etc.
4. **Follow the grading rubric.** Locate the grading rubric and make sure you understand the rubric criteria and scoring. Identify the basic elements, such as word count or number of pages, font size, and title page if required.
5. **Focus on assignment essentials.** Check to ensure you have correctly **applied and integrated** the **concepts from what you have learned.** Then edit the paper for sentence structure, grammar, and proper citations. *All of these basics may count towards points in the rubric*, so get help if you need to!
6. **Pay attention to** how the instructor describes the assignment in class.
7. **Listen carefully to what your instructor is requesting**, and determine your audience. If you missed the class, ask to discuss the assignment during professor office hours.
8. **Assignment questions may be SUGGESTIONS rather than REQUIREMENTS.** Unless the instructor asks you to answer each question, use them as guidelines.
9. **Make sure your thesis has a *how or why* component**, including the topic and your position on that topic. The rest of your paper is support for your thesis. (See thesis handout *W2: Writing an Effective Thesis Statement*!)
10. **Let your assignment rest a day** if you can, so you can review it one final time with a fresh perspective.

Good luck! You are on your way to developing a great paper!