



Step 1: Thinking About the Assignment and Audience

The Writing Center

Did you know that most people lose points on their assignments from simply not following directions? This worksheet will enable you to learn as much as possible about your assignment and intended audience so you will be able to write your paper more effectively. Write your response to each of the following in the space provided.

1. Read the assignment out loud to yourself (SLOWLY!). Pay particular attention to the tasks you are to complete. Look for details. This may seem strange at first, but try it anyway.
2. Underline, highlight, or number each separate instruction/detail in the prompt. Example:
Write a persuasive essay that analyzes the theme of the story. Have a strong thesis.
Discuss symbolism and characterization.
3. Now, make a to-do list of each of the tasks. Use a separate sheet of paper so you will have plenty of room. Example:
 - i. Must be persuasive
 - ii. Analyze theme
 - iii. Write a thesis
 - iv. Discuss symbolism
 - v. Discuss characterization
4. Write down any terms you don't know. Look them up in the dictionary and write the definition beside the term.
5. Are there any requirements not explicitly stated in the prompt but that are necessary in order to complete the assignment? Write them here. Example: correct spelling, good sentence structure.

6. What is the purpose for this essay? Are you supposed to state your opinion (argument/persuasive)? Do you want your audience to believe your analysis (persuasive)? Are you just sharing facts, like a newspaper reporter (informative)? If you are unclear, be sure to ask your teacher! If you don't understand the purpose of the assignment, then chances are you will write the wrong kind of paper.
7. Who is your audience for this paper (besides your teacher)? Are you writing to a general college educated audience, an organization, a group of people who disagree with you?
8. What kind of characteristics does this audience have? HINT: Put yourself in your readers' shoes. What do they believe? What do they know about your topic?
9. What does your audience NOT know about your topic? What will you have to tell them?
10. Why should your readers care about this topic? How will you make your essay interesting/relevant to them?
11. What kinds of information will your readers respond to? What kinds of evidence will they find convincing? Make a list and use it to help during your research.