

ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS

What do you really mean?

The following tips tell you what is really meant by some common assignment task descriptors. When you review the assignment with your students it may be useful to go over the terms you've used and be sure they understand what you meant by them.

ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS

Identification Terms:

cite, define, enumerate, give, identify, indicate, list, mention, name, state

Description Terms:

describe, discuss, review, summarize, diagram, illustrate, sketch, develop, outline, trace

Relation Terms:

analyze, compare, contrast, differentiate, distinguish, relate

Demonstration Terms:

demonstrate, explain why, justify, prove, show, support

Evaluation Terms:

assess, comment, criticize, evaluate, interpret, propose

WHAT DO YOU REALLY MEAN?

1. **Analyze:** Divide a complex whole into its parts or elements, laying bare parts or pieces for individual scrutiny, so as to discover the true nature or inner relationships.
2. **Compare:** Look for qualities or characteristics that resemble each other. Emphasize similarities among them, but in some cases also mention differences.
3. **Contrast:** Stress the dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeness of things, qualities, events or problems.
4. **Critique:** Express your judgment about the merit or truth of the factors or views mentioned. Give the results of your analysis of these factors, discussing their limitations and good points.
5. **Define:** Give concise, clear, and authoritative meanings. Don't give details, but make sure to give the limits of the definition. Show how the thing you are defining differs from other things.
6. **Describe:** Recount, characterize, sketch, or relate in sequence or story form.
7. **Diagram:** Give a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic answer. Usually you should label a diagram. In some cases, add a brief explanation of description.
8. **Discuss:** Examine, analyze carefully, and give reasons pro and con. Be complete, and give details.
9. **Enumerate:** Write in list or outline form, giving points concisely one by one.
10. **Evaluate:** Carefully appraise the problem, citing both advantages and limitations. Emphasize the appraisal of authorities and, to a lesser degree, your personal evaluation.
11. **Explain:** Clarify, interpret, and spell out the material you present. Give reasons for differences of opinion or of results, and try to analyze causes.
12. **Illustrate:** Use a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example to explain or clarify a problem.
13. **Interpret:** Translate, give examples of, solve, or comment on a subject, usually giving your judgment.

14. **Justify:** Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions, taking pains to be convincing.
15. **List:** As in "enumerate," write an itemized series of concise statements.
16. **Outline:** Organize a description under main points and subordinate points, omitting minor details and stressing the arrangement or classification of things.
17. **Prove:** Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence or giving clear logical reasons.
18. **Relate:** Show how things are related to, or connected with, each other or how one causes another, correlates with another, or is like another.
19. **Review:** Examine a subject critically, analyzing and commenting on the important statements to be made about it.
20. **State:** Present the main points in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details, illustrations, or examples.
21. **Summarize:** Give the main points or facts in condensed form, like the summary of a chapter, omitting details and illustrations.
22. **Trace:** In narrative form describe progress, development, or historical events from some point of origin.

COMMON DESCRIPTIONS OF INFORMATION SOURCES:

Web-based: There are many types of online information, including e-journals, home-pages, newsgroups, and more. When you discuss "web-based" resources, be specific about what sort of online information you are referring to.

Scholarly journals: Articles are long, use terminology or jargon of the discipline, usually begin with an abstract and include a bibliography (e.g., *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*; *IEEE Transactions on Microwave Theory and Techniques*).

Popular journals: These are geared towards a more general audience and available on your local newsstand. Articles are short and rarely have bibliographies. (e.g., *Maclean's*, *Newsweek*).

Current: Specifically define your boundaries for "current." Do you mean "current" as in this week, this year, this decade, this century, etc.? Can they refer to older material at all, if it is relevant?

Peer reviewed (or refereed) journal articles: Explain the process of having experts in the field examine an article before it is published to ensure that the research described is sound and of high quality. Refer students to the Notes for Authors section of a journal to determine if it follows peer review.

Primary sources: These provide firsthand information in the original words of the creator or eyewitness and may include creative works, original documents, reports of original research, or ideas.

Secondary sources: These provide information reviews and/or, evaluation, analysis or interpretations of primary sources.

REFERENCES:

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