

# UNDERSTAND YOUR ASSIGNMENT



There are two questions that you should always ask when you approach a new assignment:

- What are you going to write about?
- How will you approach the material?

By **reviewing** the assignment guidelines, **considering** your audience, and **planning** your time, you can answer these critical questions and set yourself up for success.



## Review the Assignment

Below are practical tips for reading through an assignment:

- Read the guidelines carefully (more than once) with a pen in hand.
- Highlight key words and phrases that tell you how to approach the topic (synthesize, analyze, demonstrate, evaluate, explain) or what questions you need to answer (How? Why?).
- Examine the rubric for a detailed description of grading expectations. Doing so will help you meet the content and writing requirements.



If you still have questions after reading the assignment criteria, contact your TA or professor.



## Consider Your Audience

Written assignments for courses often have two different audiences: a target audience and your instructor.

**The target audience:** Written class assignments, such as case histories or proposals, are often practice for real-world writing. The content, organization, and style of your paper can change depending on who reads it.

- What group(s) of people are you writing for?
- What does your audience already know and what do they need to know?
- What do they expect to learn?

**The instructor:** Your essay will also be read and graded by your instructor, so you'll want to think about what your instructor is expecting you to demonstrate in this assignment.

- Did your instructor emphasize concepts to think about?
- What skills has your instructor taught that you need to demonstrate in this paper?



## Plan Your Time

Time is limited. You need to think about your own expectations for your work and other activities that might limit your time. Try to answer the following questions:

- Is there a minimum or maximum length?
- Are you trying out new skills or methods in this assignment? How will this affect your time?
- Will you need to include research for this assignment? How much?
- How important is this assignment for your grade?
- What other responsibilities do you have during this time?