

The Perfect Prompt:
Getting Students to Write What You Want to Read

- I. Determine purpose(s) for having students write: what is your objective for the paper? How does the paper help you fulfill course objectives and goals?
 - a. Develop content knowledge (writing to learn)
 - b. Demonstrate content knowledge
 - c. Use disciplinary methods or foundations
 - d. Acquire and/or experiment with critical thinking
 - e. Apply course knowledge to new areas of inquiry
- II. Help students understand the prompt. As a class, unpack:
 - a. Key terms
 - b. Purpose
 - c. Evidence
 - d. What are the objectives of the course, and how does the paper fit in?
 - e. What is the audience for the paper?
 - f. What are the disciplinary conventions students should expect to practice?
- III. Keep it simple, silly!
 - a. The more details your prompt has, the more daunting it becomes.
 - b. Keep it open so that students can write something they are interested in!
 - c. Avoid too-personal question
 - d. Be aware of students' knowledge base
 - e. Consider specific/immediate situations
 - f. Encourage personalized approaches
 - g. Avoid yes/no, true/false questions
 - h. Only ask **one question**
 - i. Find a balance: not too short, not too long!
 - j. Sequence and scaffold whenever possible
- IV. Get eyes on your prompt
 - a. Circle your prompt or help you with it read the assignment
 - d. Look at the assignment from a student's point of view (**write for your audience**)
- V. Encourage students to seek feedback
 - a. Office hours
 - b. TA
 - c. Klooster Center writing assistants
 - d. Embedded writing assistant

Review the references on the reverse side for great sources for more information and sample course assignments.

References and Resources

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