

DECODING YOUR ASSIGNMENTS

Studies suggest that assignments with clearly stated purpose, tasks, and criteria can help students succeed. Assignments following this framework will outline goals, instructions, and expectations to set you up for success as you complete your work.

You might come across a paper, project, or other coursework that needs some decoding to make the purpose, task, or criteria clearer. Use the questions below to help break down each area before you begin.

Purpose

- What skills will I be practicing by completing this assignment?
- What will I learn by completing this assignment?
- How can I apply these skills or knowledge to my career?

Task

- Is there a specific process or way to complete the assignment?
- What steps should I take to complete the assignment? Is there a checklist?
- Some assignments may feel intentionally unclear at first. This is part of the design process to encourage deeper thinking and problem-solving. When you encounter a lack of clarity, ask yourself: ***What steps can I take to interpret the task? How does working through this ambiguity help me develop critical skills?***

Criteria

- How can I ensure that I'm meeting expectations?
- What would high quality work look like for this assignment?
- What steps can I take to review and strengthen my work before submitting?

ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION

Drop-In Hours: Visit your instructor's drop-in hours, also known as office hours, to ask questions to get clarification on the assignment. Use the questions above or take time to reflect on previous assignments to ask more specific questions related to your experiences.

Peer Support: Supports like tutoring and help centers are great for studying, but they are also useful when you have questions about assignments. These students have successfully completed the courses they support and can be great resources if you have assignment questions along with visiting drop-in hours. They won't complete the assignment for you, but they can help you brainstorm, discuss expectations, or share advice.