

# How to Understand Assignment Language

Assignments can be difficult, especially if you don't understand what it is being asked of you. Here is a list and explanation of different terms you may see or hear in your assignments.

## Analyze

To examine or study a subject in detail to explain or interpret how the different parts affect the meaning of the whole

For example:

Assignment: Analyze the poem "The Raven" by looking at the words Edgar Allen Poe chose to use to create a dark feeling throughout the poem.

What you do: You would look through the poem and examine what words Poe chose to use, how they impacted the meaning of "The Raven", and how they created an ominous feeling.

## Argue

To give logical reasons in support of or opposition to a topic

For example:

Assignment: Argue why hockey is or isn't the best sport.

What you do: Give (usually 3 or more) reasons why hockey is, or isn't, the best sport. Facts, statistics, or logical evidence are usually what you want to use as your supporting reasons.

**\*\*YOUR OPINION IS NOT EVIDENCE. It simply allows you to pick what side you stand on.\*\***

## Assess/Evaluate

To judge or determine the value of something

For example:

Assignment: Assess the film *50 First Dates* as a romantic comedy

What you do: Explain why *50 First Dates* is a good or poor example of a romantic comedy, supporting your claims with opinion and research

## Compare/ Contrast

To look at two things and describe why they are similar (compare) and why they are different (contrast)

For example:

Assignment: Compare and contrast apartment style and traditional dorms

What you do: You would find the aspects that apartment and dorm life share. Then, you would find the differences.

## Create/Generate

To make or produce something

For example:

Assignment: Create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Romeo and Juliet and West Side Story

What you do: Make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the two

## Critique

To review something and then give your opinion on about it OR to assess something, supporting your assessment with research and data

For example:

Assignment: Critique the *Mona Lisa's* eyes

What you do: Look at the eyes of the *Mona Lisa*. Decide what you think about them and then write about it.

## Define

To give the distinguishing characteristics or to mark the limit of something

For example:

Homework: Define the word “interpersonal”

What you do: Explain the word by showing what type of thing it is and what sets it apart from other similar concepts

## Explain

To clarify or describe a subject

For example:

Assignment: Explain why understanding how to use commas is important.

What you do: Describe why commas are important. “Commas are important because...”

## Infer

To develop a conclusion based on facts or context clue

For example:

Assignment: Infer what the people were walking away from in the short story “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

What you do: Figure out, based on what you have read and talked about in class, what the people were walking away from.

## Interpret

To tell the meaning of something

For example:

Assignment: Interpret the convertible in the short story “The Red Convertible”

What you do: Decide what the convertible means, portrays, or might stand for and explain it.

## Reflect

To look back on something and critically analyze it

For example:

Assignment: Reflect on an argument with someone and explain why it happened

What you do: Look back on an argument you had with someone. Explain why it happened or what led up to the argument and how you feel about it now that you are looking back on it.

## Solve

To find the solution or answer of a given question

For example:

Assignment: Solve for "x"

What you do: Find what "x" equals.

## Synthesize

To combine into a coherent whole

For example:

Assignment: Synthesize 6 sources on violence in video games

What you do: You find 6 sources, and then you want to demonstrate connections between the sources, showing where the sources share opinions or facts and where they differ.