

Transparent Assignment Design

Transparent assignment design significantly boosts student success by eliminating ambiguity around expectations and criteria. When students know exactly what's being asked of them, their in- and out-of-class engagement improves, their confidence grows, and they have a stronger foundation for developing executive-function skills.

Assignment design

Purpose: (skills + why it matters/how it aligns with course goal)

Task(s): (delineated steps) Time estimate: __ minutes

Criteria: (explicit explanation of successful completion/rubric)

First step (optional): starter sentence/prompt to singular action:

Examples: link to “meets” & “not-yet.”

Example assignment rewrite (before → after):

- Before, the assignment read :
Analyze the article and discuss implications.
- After transparency rewrite:
Purpose: *Practice extracting claims and evidence to prepare for Essay 1.*
Tasks (15–20 min):

1. Highlight the article's main claim (≤15 words).
2. Copy two evidence quotes.
3. Write one 2-sentence implication for first-year students.

Criteria: Claim clear, evidence relevant, implication logical (see 3-line rubric).

First step (2 min): Paste the claim in the assignment window.

Examples: Examples of “meets criteria” and “not yet” are available in course library.

The following is an example of an ideally designed transparent assignment.

Assignment Title:
Mini-Analysis Essay (750 words)

Purpose:

This assignment helps you practice making a clear claim and supporting it with evidence. This is a foundational skill for all college writing and many future courses. You'll learn how to move from summary to analysis, which strengthens your critical thinking.

Tasks (___ min):

1. Choose a short passage from the course text (1–3 sentences).
2. Write a claim about what the passage shows or argues.
3. Explain how specific phrases or details support your claim.
4. Connect your analysis to one idea from class discussion or lecture.
5. Conclude with a 2–3 sentence statement about why this analysis matters.

Criteria:

Your work will be considered successful when it:

1. Makes a clear, arguable claim (not just summary).
2. Uses specific evidence from the passage and explains its significance.
3. Connects the analysis to a broader course concept.
4. Is organized clearly, with paragraphs focused on one idea each.
5. Uses correct citation format (quote + page number).

Anchor Samples Provided:

“On track” sample — shows clear claim + evidence

“Not yet” sample — mostly summary, no analysis

First Step (___ min):

Choose your passage and write one sentence beginning with:
“This passage suggests that...”