A Guide On How To: Prepare Writing Assignments

- The writing process
- How to start
- Keywords to use
Prepare Writing Assignments

Using a structure to complete writing assignments will make them easier to write and more effective.

What is the Writing Process?

The Writing Process is a series of steps you can follow to write a successful writing assignment.

Successful writing assignments often require several drafts, revisions and proofreading to earn the highest grade.

It’s also important to note that the writing process illustrated above is not a fixed sequence; these steps can be rearranged, taken out of order, and re-done as many times as needed.

How can I get a good start on my writing assignment?

There are three features of your assignment you must consider:

- **What is the writing assignment** - Read your assignment as soon as you get it. Look at the prompt, and highlight the verb (action word) and any key words you see to get an overall sense of the assignment.

- **Who will read your writing** - Fellow students? An instructor? A prospective employer? Consider what you want to communicate through your writing.

- **What is the purpose of the writing assignment** - What do you want to accomplish in your writing?
  - Describe
  - Compare/Contrast
  - Process
  - Illustrate
  - Argument
  - Define
Use the chart below to determine the paragraph pattern you could use to complete a writing assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt Verbs</th>
<th>Key Words to Use</th>
<th>Paragraph Pattern to Use</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain, Trace, Show</td>
<td>Consequences, results, relation</td>
<td><strong>Cause/Effect</strong> - How things cause or are the effect of another</td>
<td>Effects of using nuclear energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare, Contrast, Identify</td>
<td>Differences, similarities</td>
<td><strong>Compare/Contrast</strong> - How ideas are the same or different</td>
<td>Nuclear energy vs. solar power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss, Illustrate</td>
<td>Specific examples</td>
<td><strong>Illustration</strong> – Proves a point using specific examples</td>
<td>Japan, Love Canal, Chernobyl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss, Define, Identify</td>
<td>Characteristics, features</td>
<td><strong>Definition</strong> – What a term or concept means using unique features</td>
<td>Renewable, disposal, efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate, Describe, Categorize</td>
<td>Categories, kinds, types, parts</td>
<td><strong>Classification</strong> – A topic sorted into categories</td>
<td>“Green” energy/nuclear energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain, Describe, Trace</td>
<td>Steps, procedures, timeline, sequences</td>
<td><strong>Process</strong> – How a particular act happens, works, or happened in the past</td>
<td>Timeline of nuclear energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain, Describe, Imagine</td>
<td>Sensory images, visual, emotion, detail</td>
<td><strong>Description</strong> – How something looks, feels, seems, etc.</td>
<td>A nuclear power plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justify, Prove, Evaluate, Recommend</td>
<td>Advantages, disadvantages, why or why not, reasons</td>
<td><strong>Argument</strong> – Why a position on an issue is correct and reasons for it</td>
<td>Advantages of nuclear power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


- Purdue University Online Writing Lab. (2011). General writing. Purdue Online Writing Lab, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. Retrieved from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/


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