

# QUICK TIPS

## Deciphering Writing Prompts Exercise

The first step for students to succeed on their writing assignments is for them to understand what the assignment prompt asks from them.

1. There are two ways you can conduct this exercise:
  - a) with a prompt from your own course; or,
  - b) with prompts from students' other courses.
- 1b. For the latter, ask students to bring to class two prompts from their other coursework:
  - a) one prompt that they found helpful; and,
  - b) one prompt they found confusing.
2. Whatever prompt you use, have students read and take notes on it, underlining key sentences or phrases.
3. Break students up into small groups to discuss their notes and observations.
4. Discuss those observations together as a class, allowing each group to present their findings.
5. In the class discussion, emphasize that deciphering prompts is an essential skill for success in all college courses. Ask students to identify their prompt's formal requirements (ie, page count, essay structure, etc), as well as its key words and passages.

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