

Transparent Assignment Design Template for Teachers*

*Instructors: This template can be used as a guide for developing, discussing, and revising written prompts for class activities and out-of-class assignments. After you gather students' feedback through the TILTed conversation about purposes, tasks and criteria (outlined below), revise and repost the prompt. Reciprocal communication with students about the purposes, tasks, and criteria for their upcoming work has demonstrably enhanced students' learning in several studies.***

Assignment Name

Due date(s):

PURPOSE: *Instructors: Define the learning objectives, in language and terms that help students recognize how this assignment will benefit their learning. Indicate how these connect with institutional learning outcomes, and how the specific knowledge and skills involved in this assignment will be important in students' lives beyond the contexts of this assignment, this course, and this institution.*

Skills: The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in this course / in school / in this field / in professional life beyond school: ...

Instructors: Introductory level students do best when focusing on 1-2 new skills at one time. Advanced students can hold a metacognitive focus on their acquisition of more skills simultaneously. [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) may help you define skills in language students will understand. Listed from cognitively simple to most complex, these skills are:

- understanding basic disciplinary knowledge and methods/tools
- applying basic disciplinary knowledge/tools to problem-solving in a similar but unfamiliar context
- analyzing • synthesizing • judging/evaluating and selecting best solutions
- creating/inventing a new interpretation, product, theory.

Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important concepts and knowledge in this discipline: ...

TASKS: *Instructors: Define what actions the students should take. [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) may be helpful. List any guidelines or a recommended sequence for students' work. Specify any mistakes to be avoided. Ensure students have equitable access to the resources needed to conduct the work. If there are sound pedagogical reasons for withholding information about how to do the assignment, then protect students' confidence and sense of belonging by including a purpose statement something like this: "The purpose of this assignment is for you to struggle and feel confused while you invent and test your own approach to the problem...." Gather students' perceptions about how they perceive the tasks, ensure they understand the tasks as you wish and that they can access the necessary resources. Then revise the prompt accordingly.*

CRITERIA: *Instructors: Define the characteristics of the finished product. Before students begin the work, provide multiple examples of what each important skill looks like in real-world practice. When students can identify precisely how strong examples differ from adequate and unacceptable examples, you will know they understand the criteria for their upcoming work as you wish. This enables students to evaluate the quality of their own efforts while they are working and to judge the success of their completed work. It is often useful to compile with students a checklist of characteristics of successful work deduced from their analyses of the excellent, adequate, and unacceptable examples you provided. Students can also use the checklist to provide feedback on peers' work. Indicate whether this task/product will be graded and/or how it factors into the student's overall grade for the course. Later, asking students to reflect and comment on their completed, graded work allows them to focus on changes to their learning strategies that might improve their future work.*

* The author developed an earlier version of this template at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

**Winkelmes, M.A. (2013). Transparency in teaching: Faculty share data and improve students' learning. *Liberal Education*, 99(2); Winkelmes, M.A., Bernacki, M., Butler, J., Zochowski, M., Golanics, J., & Harriss Weavil, K. (2016). A teaching intervention that increases underserved college students' success. *Peer Review*, 18(1/2); Calkins, C., & Winkelmes, M.A. (2018). A teaching method that boosts UNLV students' retention. *UNLV Best Teaching Practices Expo*. 3. https://oasis.library.unlv.edu/btp_expo/3.