

Transparent Assignment Design Template for Teachers*

This template can be used as a guide for developing, explaining, and discussing class activities and out-of-class assignments. Reciprocal communication with students about the purposes, tasks, and criteria for their upcoming work makes the work transparent and has demonstrably enhanced students' learning in several studies.**

Assignment Name	Due date(s):
<p>Purpose: Note to 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.</p>	
<p>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:</p>	
<p>Note to 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. Terms from Bloom's Taxonomy may help you explain these skills in language students will understand. Listed from cognitively simple to most complex, these skills are:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.	
<p>Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline: ...</p>	
<p>Tasks: Note to instructors: Define what actions the students should take. Bloom's Taxonomy vocabulary may be helpful. List any guidelines or a recommended sequence for students' work. Specify any mistakes to be avoided. If there are sound pedagogical reasons for withholding information about how to do the assignment, protect students' confidence and sense of belonging with 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..."</p>	
<p>Criteria for Success:</p> <p>Note to instructors: Define the characteristics of the finished product. Provide multiple examples of what these characteristics look like in real-world practice to encourage students' creativity and reduce their incentive to copy any one example too closely. Engage students in analyzing multiple examples of real-world work before the students begin their own work on the assignment. Discuss how excellent work differs from adequate work. 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 provide or compile with students a checklist of characteristics of successful work. Students can also use the checklist to provide feedback on peers' coursework. 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.</p>	

* 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., Golani, 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.