

Types of Assignments

You will be asked to do many different assignments as a college student. These are general descriptions of some common types of written assignments. These descriptions only explain base information about these assignment types, *always read your professor's assignment sheet* for specific instructions and criteria.

Type of Assignment	Assignment Description
DISCUSSION POST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a blend of casual and formal writing that is typically short and written online • Mirrors class discussion, so respond to classmates' questions and pose your own questions respectfully • Requires you to be thoughtful and fully explain your ideas
ESSAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps you analyze or synthesize ideas from class • Includes a position, claim, or argument (a thesis statement) • Relies on evidence gathered from lectures, assigned readings, and/or outside research • Requires good organization, typically includes into an introduction, a body, and a conclusion (see the TLC's handout on writing essays)
JOURNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses your on-going (daily or weekly) thoughts on readings, lectures, or discussions • Requires you to write casually, but keep it appropriate and respectful to be mindful of your potential audience
REFLECTION PAPER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses how a topic relates to your life or other broad themes (think about it like writing that is "looking into a mirror") • Refers to readings, class lectures, and discussions
REPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides data or facts, very common in business and science • Includes graphs, charts, tables, or images (if necessary)
RESEARCH PAPER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins with a topic and a research question • Includes information from reliable primary and secondary sources and cites those sources properly • Includes a position, claim, or argument (a thesis statement)
RESPONSE PAPER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses your thoughts after reading or learning about a specific issue or topic • Compares/contrasts ideas with other readings, lectures, or discussions • Uses a blend of casual writing and formal writing (be sure to refer to your professor's guidelines)

Definitions for Commonly Used Words in Written Assignments

Word	Definition
ANALYZE	to separate a whole text into parts to closely examine the parts; to write about how a text makes its points (compare with <i>Summarize</i>); to write about what a text means <i>and</i> how it functions or what the purpose of a text is <i>and</i> how that purpose is achieved
ARGUE	to take a stand on a controversial or challenging issue and present reasons or evidence in hopes of persuading others to reconsider their views and/or take action
DESCRIBE	(also <i>illustrate</i>) to “paint a picture” with words, often by giving sensory impressions (what you see, hear, taste, smell, and touch)
DEVELOP	to create or expand an idea, often using other methods listed on this sheet
INTERPRET	to explain a text from your perspective; to write what you think the text’s meaning or significance is
OUTLINE	to write a text’s main points in your own words and organize them under different headings and sub-headings
PROOFREAD	to review a document for typographical errors (“typos”)(compare with <i>Revise</i>)
REFLECT	to write about how a text or process has personally affected you; to explain how a text connects with your experiences, beliefs, and/or values
REPORT	(also <i>present</i>) to tell about results, often including data or facts—consider experimental reports with measurements, product reports with specifications or recommendations, progress reports with changes made over time
RESPOND	to “speak back” to a text; to write about what the text made you think and feel
REVIEW	to re-view or look again; to present another look at the text, often for a specific purpose
REVISE	to change parts of the writing to improve a text, often done with comments from others (readers) and with attention to the whole document and to specific parts (compare with <i>Proofread</i>)
SUMMARIZE	to write the main points of a text in your own words; to write “what a text says” (compare with <i>Analyze</i>)
SYNTHESIZE	to bring similar and/or conflicting texts or ideas together into a new, unified whole that shows how they relate to each other, especially in terms of a pattern, trend, or fresh perspective (often done after an analysis)

References:

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Writer’s Reference*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2011. Print.
 Lundsford, Andrea A. *The Everyday Writer*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010. Print.
 Ramage, John D., John C. Bean, and June Johnson, eds. *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing*. 6th ed. Boston: Longman, 2012. Print.
 Webster’s II New College Dictionary. 1995. Print.