



How to Write Clear Instructions



What?

Use straightforward language to explain what the assignment is and what it is not.

Avoid jargon, technical terms, chattiness, side-comments, or digressions from the main point.

Be specific about the students' audience, context, and purpose (rhetorical situation).

Why?

Explain why the students are doing the assignment. Why is it important? What will they learn from it?

Explain how the assignment fits into the larger context of the class. Remind students of how it builds on what they have already learned. Tell them how they will build on it in future assignments.

How?

Provide resources to help students learn any skills they will need to complete the assignment (how to use any required technology, how to use the library, how to cite sources, etc.)

Provide templates, models, or examples.

Do.

Provide step-by-step instructions on what the students should do.

Break complex tasks down into simpler parts.

Adapted from: Hewett, B. (2015). *Reading to learn and writing to teach: Literacy strategies for online writing instruction*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

