

# Assigning Homework

Unknown macro: 'space-breadcrumbs'

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## Key guidelines

Students learn best when assignments have clear goals, written instructions and criteria for how they will be evaluated.

Engage as many senses as possible when giving homework assignments. Students need to *see* the instructions, *hear* the instructions, and, whenever possible, view finished examples of the assignment. They also benefit from having context - *How does this assignment build on what they've already learned and move their learning forward?* - and clear criteria for grading - *What measurable features must they include in order to complete the assignment successfully?* All of this information should be presented and thoroughly reviewed in class through handouts or slides that students take notes on or photograph, but it should also be available for them to reference once they leave the classroom.

When students can see a range of graded examples of the completed assignment, it becomes a reality. *What does A-work look like, and what makes it A-work? What makes for C-work, which at AAU is simply "meeting expectations"?* Showing them the criteria for the assignment and then discussing the merits and deficits of each example brings it further into focus. Similarly, a well-designed rubric spells out the measurable elements required to achieve a grade or points within a certain range. This keeps both instructor and student honest in the event of a student challenging or questioning their grade, and it also facilitates the grading process.

## Download resources for assignments

 SampleAs...ment.pdf	 Assignme...late.doc	 WritingAs...plate.pdf
Sample Assignment with Guidelines	Assignment Template (PDF)	Writing Assignment Template

## Reading assignments

### Using Readings in Your Course

Why use readings? The most common reasons to use readings are to highlight, support, or add to the key concepts in a course.

Reading can also be used to expose students to the form and style of writing in your particular field and model standards of writing.

When choosing readings, think about the many different types of readings available: blogs, interviews, reviews, newspapers, editorials, critiques, literature, poetry, summaries, even select paragraphs from a longer article.

**Answer these questions to help you focus both your reading assignments and your follow-up activities.**

#### 1. How important is the reading?

Students' study time and class time is precious. Some students may have tremendous difficulty with reading and they need to know how to prioritize their time and energy

Use reading/study guides to explain the relevance and relative importance of the readings. Dedicate an appropriate amount of class time to "going over" the reading.

#### 2. What do you want students to be able to do after doing the reading?

Students will read 'smarter' if they know what to look for and why they will need that information.

Create reading/study guides with focus questions to lead student to exact learning outcome you want students to reach.

### 3. How do you know that students have done the reading and met the desired outcome?

Reading is often considered to be a passive activity that students have to struggle with on their own. However, teachers can help students become better readers and get more out of what they read by preparing them for the material and giving them opportunities to actively process it. When you follow up on the reading with specific activities, you send the signal that the readings are important.

Create an assignment, activity and/or quiz to assess the knowledge you want students to gain from the reading.

## Creating Study Guides for Reading Assignments

It's not enough to say, "Read this article and we'll talk about it next week in class." A study guide for reading assignments helps students know exactly what to look for while reading and how to apply that information to the content of the course.

One way to create a study guide is to examine your own process of reading. As you read, write out the questions you ask yourself or questions you think students may ask; then, organize them into a study guide for your students. Most study guides include the following:

1. **The Rationale:** A brief explanation of how the reading connects to the course. A brief bio of the author may also be relevant.
2. **Pre-reading Questions:** Questions to activate students' existing knowledge about the topic of the reading. Allow students time to answer these questions in class before assigning the reading.
3. **Comprehension Questions:** Overarching focus questions that you want students to be able to answer once they have read the article. Questions that check for understanding of the key points. These questions should be assigned as homework in addition to the reading itself.
4. **Follow-up Questions, Assignment or Quiz:** When you follow up on the reading with specific activities (an assignment, activity and/or quiz), you send the signal that the readings are important. Follow up questions ask students to apply what they have learned or evaluate the merit of ideas. With an assignment or quiz you can check students understanding of the main concepts.

### Sample Study Guide

**Rationale:** Read the *New York Times Magazine* (August, 12, 2007) article, "The Road to Clarity," by Joshua Yaffa. The article describes how a graphic designer and a typographer use their obsession with fonts and legibility to clean up America's road signs, one letter at a time.

**Pre-reading Questions:** (*Answer these questions before you read the article.*)

- Read the title of the article. What do you expect this article will be about? What kind of 'clean up' of America's signs do you think they are talking about?
- What do you think makes a typeface more readable? Less readable?

**Comprehension Questions:** (*Submit answers in writing.*)

- What major changes have the designers implemented and why?
- What is the name of the new typeface for America's road signs?
- Create a timeline describing the steps the designers went through to develop the new typeface.

**Follow-up Questions:** (*Prepare to discuss these questions in small groups during the next class session. You will also have a short quiz at the beginning of class on the answers to one or more of the comprehension questions.*)

- Which elements in the development process for the new typeface (Clearview) could you adapt to your own creative or design process?
- In the article on p.38, Meeker says "Design can be social activism." Do you agree? Are his own accomplishments "social activism"? Why or why not?
- What questions do you have about this topic that were left unanswered by the article?

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