



Understanding Your Assignment—English Transcript

You've just been given an assignment. How do you complete it? The difference between doing a super job and not meeting expectations may depend on how well you read and understand the assignment sheet. This tutorial is going to give you the tools you need to understand your assignment, as well as a few tips to help you successfully complete it without any surprises.

The first step is to read your assignment sheet carefully. Here's an example:

Should there be zoos?

Write a convincing argument to support your belief in favor of or in opposition to zoos. Your essay should incorporate information from your research, including direct quotes to support your argument.

Keep track of your sources. You will be required to have at least one primary source and three other quality sources.

Every Friday, turn in a summary of your research and any questions that arose as you researched. Your final essay with your works cited list will be due on March 8.

After you read it, go back and underline or circle key information. To start, figure out the most important things.

For example, what is my topic? That's right. It's zoos. And what am I supposed to find out about it? Oh, my belief in favor of or in opposition to zoos.

Then I need to figure out what product I'm being asked to make. I see that I am supposed to write a convincing argument in an essay format and oh, yes, a works cited list.

Hey, I can use Citation Maker for that!

Also, I need to look for when the assignment is due. It is due on March 8. That tells me how long I have to complete the project.

Next, I need to check if there's work to turn in along the way, like a weekly summary of my notes, a reflection on what I've learned each week, or a first draft. I see every Friday, I need to turn in a summary of my research and any questions I have.

Now, I need to see what resources need to be used, like how many? What kind? Databases, websites, periodicals? Hmm...and it looks like I'm required to have at least one primary source and three other quality sources. Keep track of those sources. Huh! That's a good reminder.



Okay, is there anything else that needs to be included? I better read the assignment sheet one more time. Oh, good thing I did. I also need to include direct quotes to support my argument. As you can see, it's important to understand the assignment and your role in completing it. If your friends were to ask you -- "What is this assignment about?" -- could you tell them?

After you read an assignment sheet and underline the important information, try to fill in the blank to this prompt. The purpose of my essay is to ...(blank). If you apply this to our example assignment, you might say, "The purpose of my essay is to convince my readers that there should be or should not be zoos."

If you cannot easily give a basic description of the main task, you should revisit the assignment sheet and then talk to your teacher.

Often assignments are given based on what you are learning in class, so it's a good idea to review any class readings and work that you have already done about the topic.

Now let's take a look at the major parts of the research process. Each step along the path stands for a step of the research process. Some steps take more time to complete than others. This is not an exact picture, but an example of how research and writing usually goes for many people.

You may move back and forth between one or more steps several times. For example, let's say that you're arguing against zoos. After rereading the first draft of your essay, you may realize that you need more evidence about how confined spaces negatively affect zoo animals. So you will need to go back to the Find Sources step to gather more information, and then revise your work.

You will need strong evidence to support your argument and some understanding of the opposing argument. For this, you'll need high quality sources. Do you know the best way to find the sources you need? If not, plan to ask a librarian, and always bring your assignment sheet when asking for help.

Look closely at what types of resources you need to use: books, magazines, newspapers, databases, websites, people. Also, think about the places you'll need to go to use them: school library, public library, quiet time at home, and so on. Library resources can often be accessed from home, so remember to ask the library staff how to log in.

Here are some final helpful hints. To keep research from feeling overwhelming, start early and do not procrastinate. Ask your teacher if you have any questions. Make sure you plan enough time for each step of the research process. And remember, revisit your assignment sheet periodically to make sure you are covering all of the requirements. Doing these things will help you avoid stress and allow you to do your very best work every step of the way.



For specific examples and for more information about this topic and the entire research process, explore OSLIS. Thank you to the Oregon Clip Project for allowing the OSLIS committee to adapt their tutorials. OSLIS-- Learn to Research. Research to Learn.