

Task Analysis

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by an enormous task and think it impossible ever to finish it? Are some tasks seemingly unrelated to any of your goals? A task can refer to an entire assignment or it can refer to one part of a larger group of things to be done. Task analysis helps you break down an assignment into several steps so that you can see what needs to be done and that each step is manageable. Task analysis also enables you to see what other goals you are working toward and how the assignment helps you achieve these goals.

Understand the task fully

- Find out what is expected for the assignment.
- Find out what criteria will be used to evaluate the assignment.
- Ask your professor, classmates, TA, reference librarians, or writing tutors to help you clarify your understanding of the assignment.

Define your goals

- What is the purpose of the assignment; what are you expected to learn?
- What do you want to learn?
- Create your own criteria for successfully completing the assignment.

Assess what resources the task will require

- How much time is needed and how much do you have?
- What do you already know about the topic and what questions do you have?
- Do you know which information you need and where to find it?

Breakdown the assignment into steps

- Check to see if your assignment has already been broken down into ordered steps in the assignment guidelines.
- If not, break the assignment down into steps that are as small and specific as possible. Finishing smaller steps is rewarding and gives you a sense of progress.
- Set target dates for completing each step.
- Date the actual completion of steps to monitor your progress and alert you to any delays or if some things take longer/shorter.
- Evaluate process and make changes as needed.