



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

Ask your professor, classmates, TA, reference librarians or writing tutors to help you clarify your understanding of the assignment.
Find out what is expected for the assignment.
Find out what criteria will be used to evaluate 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?
What level of thinking does the assignment require? (See Bloom's Taxonomy <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/bloom.html>)

Break down assignment into steps

- Students need to analyze and break down the assignment into ordered steps; however, some assignments are easily broken down or already broken down by the professor. See the handouts on steps for Writing an Academic Paper and Preparing an Oral Presentation.
- Initially, try to be as specific and detailed in your breakdown as possible. Finishing smaller steps is rewarding and gives you a sense of progress.
- Once you have established steps for the assignment, set target dates for completing each step. Hint: make the steps specific so you know when you have finished them and you can celebrate each accomplishment
- Date actual completion of steps to monitor your progress and alert you to any delays, or to note if some things take longer/shorter. Then you can change estimated time next time you have a similar assignment.
- Evaluate process and make changes as needed.

Refer to the handout to see an example of a student using task analysis for an oral presentation on global warming.