

[YOUR NAME]
[DATE]
[CLASS AND SECTION]

Writing In College

1. Breaking Down the Prompt

You will begin with reading the writing prompt, identifying the verbs, and creating an action plan to address the assignment. Once you have completed this, you will then do a free write for five minutes about the writing prompt.

Let's look at a writing prompt together.

Writing Prompt: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/englishcomp1/chapter/assignment-narrative-prewriting-and-drafting/>

1. Read through the whole assignment. There's a lot there, so make sure you read all the way through-- don't leap to conclusions.
2. List the key verbs or action items in the prompt (particularly in the section with the heading "Assignment Instructions"). What are you supposed to do here?

[WRITE LIST HERE]

3. What are you supposed to turn in for this assignment? Fill in the blanks:

What to turn in: _____

How to turn it in: _____

4. How long do you think it would take you to complete this assignment? Write your estimate below. If the assignment were due this time next week, when would you do the work?

Estimated time needed: _____

When would you find this time? _____

5. What components or characteristics are expected in this essay? Type (or cut and paste) a list of the elements required in this essay.

[LIST COMPONENTS HERE]

6. Complete a five-minute free-write. If you were going to do this assignment, what could you write about?

[WRITE FREE-WRITE HERE]

2. What if I'm still not sure where to start?

Read the following essay prompt. Let's say it's for an imaginary course called "Ways of Knowing."

French novelist Anatole France wrote: "An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don't." What don't you know? ¹

1. Spend around 5 minutes breaking down what the question is asking for. Are there words or concepts you need to review or look up?
2. Spend around 5 minutes brainstorming how you could tackle the question.
3. Use the template below to write an email to an imaginary professor sharing your initial ideas and asking for clarification.

Fill in the following template with your own personal responses:

Dear Professor Unklar:

I was hoping you could provide some clarification about the essay topic for "Ways of Knowing." My understanding is that this assignment is asking us to [YOUR BEST UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THE PROMPT IS LOOKING FOR - based on question #1 above]. I was thinking of approaching this by [YOUR APPROACH - based on question #2 above], but wanted to run the idea past you first.

Thank you for any guidance you can offer!

[YOUR NAME]

3. Brainstorming A Narrative

As we've seen, a narrative is a story that is told to make a point. When choosing which story to tell, it can be helpful to think about an overall point that you can make with your story. Let's look at a narrative essay prompt:

Choose one of the following topics to write your own narrative essay. The topic you decide on should be something you care about, and the narration should be a means of communicating an idea that ties to the essay's theme.

Friends

1. Gaining independence
2. A friend's sacrifice
3. A significant trip with your family
4. A wedding or a funeral
5. An incident from family legend

The World Around You

¹ Brown University admissions essay question, as quoted in Ryan, Julia. "Applying to College Shouldn't Require Answering Life's Great Questions." [The Atlantic](#). 4 Oct. 2013

1. A storm, a flood, an earthquake, or another natural event
2. A school event
3. The most important minutes of a sporting event

Lessons of Daily Life

1. A time you confronted authority
2. A time you had to deliver bad news
3. Your biggest social blunder

Firsts

1. Your first day of school
2. The first performance you gave
3. A first date

Notice that sentence “the narration should be a means of communicating an idea...”. In other words, the story should make a point.

- Step 1: Choose three of these topics that you could imagine writing about.
- Step 2: For each one, briefly sketch out how you could tell the story (just a few words or a short sentence). How would you set the stage (build up)? What is the problem? How was it solved?
- Step 3: For each of the three topics, write a sentence or two stating the point of the story. What’s the big takeaway? What can your reader learn from it?

- Topic 1:
 - Story:
 - Build-up:
 - Problem:
 - Solution:
 - Point of the story:

- Topic 2:
 - Story:
 - Build-up:
 - Problem:
 - Solution:
 - Point of the story:

- Topic 3:
 - Story:
 - Build-up:
 - Problem:
 - Solution:
 - Point of the story:

4. Cause and Effect

Effect: Anxiety has increased among college students.

Causes: List 3 ideas you have about possible causes.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Try it the other way.

What effect might be indicated by the three causes below?

Effect:

Causes:

1. The average U.S. resident spends over two hours on social media every day.
2. The average worker spends over a quarter of their work week on e-mail.
3. On average, U.S. adults send more than 30 texts per day.

Rubric/Checklist

Activity/Task	Criteria	Student Notes	Points
1. Breaking Down the Prompt	<p>Step 1: Read through the assignment prompt</p> <p>Step 2: List the key verbs or action items in the prompt</p> <p>Step 3: These questions get at the question of <i>what</i> you're supposed to turn in and <i>how</i> to turn it in. (Important questions!) Fill in the blanks.</p> <p>Step 4: This is a question about time management. Fill in the blanks with your estimate of how long it would take to complete the assignment and a short statement about <i>when</i> you would do the work if you had to.</p> <p>Step 5: What exactly is this prompt asking for? Type (or cut and paste) a list of the elements required in the assignment. (for instance "A pre-write paragraph," "An outline," etc.)</p> <p>Step 6: Complete a five-minute free-write, as though you were planning to do the writing assignment in the prompt.</p>		<p>___ / 25</p> <p>0: Not done 18: Needs improvement 25: Meets expectations 26: Exceeds expectations</p> <p>Instructor Notes:</p>
2. What if I'm still not sure where to start?	This activity provides a strategy you can use if you're unable to figure out		<p>___ / 25</p> <p>0: Not done</p>

	<p>exactly how to tackle an essay prompt.</p> <p>Step 1: Spend 5 minutes reading and interpreting the given prompt.</p> <p>Step 2: Spend 5 minutes brainstorming how you'd tackle the prompt. You don't need to include your notes, but you'll need them for the next step.</p> <p>Step 3: Use the given template to write an effective email to the (imaginary) instructor asking whether your approach meets the criteria of the assignment.</p>		<p>18: Needs improvement 25: Meets expectations 26: Exceeds expectations</p> <p>Instructor Notes:</p>
3. Brainstorming A Narrative	<p>This activity asks you to brainstorm three possible narrative essays. For each of the three prompts you choose, write at least one sentence describing the build-up, one sentence describing the problem, and one describing the solution. Then write a sentence or two describing the point of the story. What can the reader take away from this story?</p>		<p>___ / 25</p> <p>0: Not done 18: Needs improvement 25: Meets expectations 26: Exceeds expectations</p> <p>Instructor Notes:</p>
4. Cause and Effect	<p>Step 1: List three causes that might lead to the effect "Anxiety has increased among college students."</p> <p>Step 2: This time, write an effect that might proceed from the three causes listed.</p>		<p>___ / 25</p> <p>0: Not done 18: Needs improvement 25: Meets expectations 26: Exceeds expectations</p> <p>Instructor Notes:</p>
All Workshop Activities			<p>Total:</p> <p>___ / 100</p>