

# Support: Analyzing a Prompt

ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
→ As a pre-writing activity when students must fully understand the prompt to address it well	→ As a pre-writing activity when students must fully understand the prompt to address it well	→ As a pre-writing activity when students must fully understand the prompt to address it well	• As a pre-writing activity when students must fully understand the prompt to address it well
<b>Who could this support?</b>	Students who will need to address a complex prompt whether it is in response to a text, report, data, etc.		
<b>Purpose:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help students analyze a prompt by breaking it into smaller pieces and identifying important questions and requirements to successfully accomplish the writing/speaking task.</li> </ul>		
<b>Communicating the purpose:</b>	Inform students that they will be responding to a prompt about what they have read, so it is important to break it down to ensure they know the task's expectations and address all parts of the prompt with accuracy.		

## Before

- Prework** Select a text-dependent prompt from tier 1 curriculum that students will have to write a response to. Determine the most important components of this prompt before introducing it to students. See step 2 for some ideas.
- [Use a rubric](#) to review the grading criteria for the task to guide students in their analysis. Students should see the rubric as well.

## During

- Step 1** Read the prompt once in full. Then, inform students they'll analyze it together to ensure everyone understands the writing task, a skill vital for independent writing across all classes and potentially on tests like LEAP.
- Step 2** Students should be given supports that allow for a gradual release over time to analyze a prompt on their own and without the aid of a graphic organizer. However, the first few times that students are analyzing a prompt provide them with this [template](#) to walk them through the process with the teacher.

## Step 2 (Continued)

- Model this process before allowing them to work with partners or alone. If students still are not ready to work alone, continue to model until they are proficient.

## Step 3

Once students are proficient with task analysis, students should duplicate the process through annotation on the actual prompt without the guidance of the charts on the template. Students should highlight the skills and knowledge the prompt wants them to address using two different colored highlighters. They should make note in the margins of their interpretations of these questions and list the skills they will need to perform (ex. write a claim, evidence, and reasoning).

- Students should circle keywords that indicate the type of task they will need to perform. In the margins they should jot down characteristics of this type of task that they need to remember to include (ex. style of writing, intended audience, specific language etc).
- Students should underline technical requirements they need to have in their task as well (type of sources, length of task, grammar specifications, etc).

## Step 4

Before releasing students to begin, ensure they can answer the following about the prompt:

- What are the main goals of this prompt? What knowledge do students need to demonstrate? What skills are necessary to show proficiency? ◦ What type of task am I completing? What are specific components I need to include?
- What type of sources/texts (if any) can I use? How many should I use?

Consider having the above questions listed under the prompt for students to answer before they begin writing.

## I Know I'm Successful When...

- Students can annotate a prompt independently and show their understanding through their written and/or spoken responses by fully addressing all components of a given prompt

## Additional Considerations

- Some prompts are more complex than others and the amount of annotation and analysis needed will vary.
- Make sure students are familiar with the various types of text structures as they relate to the purpose of the writing.
- Students may still need writing frames that are appropriate to the purpose of writing.
- All students who need extra support should have clear steps for how to duplicate, and may even benefit from small group instruction with an additional model and think-aloud.
- Collaborative groupings are also a great structure for additional support. Allow students to brainstorm possible claims in their groups, or give each other feedback prior to checking it. Model what these conversations should sound like and circulate to ensure they are meaningful.

## References

UCLA Undergraduate Writing Center. (2016). Reading Essay Prompts.

[https://uwc.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/UWC\\_handouts\\_readingessayprompts.pdf](https://uwc.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/UWC_handouts_readingessayprompts.pdf)

San José State University Writing Center. (2014). Essay planning: How to read a prompt.

<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Essay%20Planning%20-%20How%20to%20Read%20a%20Prompt.pdf>