

What Professors Want From a Paper? 5 Things You Need to Know

1. Read the assignment, carefully. As you read, consider what you've been asked to read, to discuss, and to analyze. Cumulatively, these aspects form the assessment of the assignment. In other words, each assignment tests you on what you know and what you can do with that knowledge. Your goal is to show off what you know. Each assignment has several components; determine what those are and create a checklist. If you aren't sure about the scope of the assignment, ask.
2. Whether your paper or project is short or long, if you do not understand anything about the assignment, make an appointment with your professor. Yes, that means you need to read and assess the assignment once you receive it, thereby giving yourself time to understand. Go into the meeting with several questions and a direction. Throwing up your hands will not move the meeting toward you realizing your purpose. You wouldn't stop bathing because your shower is broken; you'd create a makeshift bathing station. Working from I don't know is unproductive—instead, work from what you *DO* know and then ask questions about what you don't know.
3. Create a plan for writing. There are several ways to draft: free drafting, outlining, clustering, notes, working backwards, and more. Once you have a plan, stick to it as you write—even if your plan is to free write. Write in this manner for a set time limit and assess how it fits in with your assignment checklist. Utilizing a plan for writing shapes your writing, in particular your logic and the development of your ideas. Writing isn't mysterious; in fact, writing is as logical as a mathematical equation. Take the pressure out of it by using your plan.
4. Once you have a draft, revise. The most experienced and successful writers revise. Creating time to revise is crucial to your success in an assignment. As you read your writing, take notes on where the draft needs more information to suit your checklist. Additionally, if you plan ahead, have an editor review your work. Another pair of eyes is helpful. Plus, your professor may be willing to give you feedback on a draft. If you make such a request, choose 3-5 concepts that you want reviewed.
5. Create space to be enthusiastic about the subject of your writing. You may not have chosen the focus, and yet, you have immense creative power by choosing how to check items off your list. Make writing interesting if you are exasperated or lost. Think about writing and revision as problems that require your positive attitude. When a writer begins positive, it will be present in the finished product. Be prepared to receive criticism and face it head on. If you can revise and resubmit, do so. If not, the next assignment is within your reach. Everyone is capable of improving their writing and finding ways to meet the assessment milestones.