



Best Practices: Developing Learning Goals for an Assignment

1. Begin with the larger goals or objectives of your course. What new knowledge do you hope students will leave the course with when it's done? What new skills or abilities will they learn or practice? How will the knowledge and skills build on what they already know and bring into your course?

2. Working from your general course goals, begin narrowing the scope to one or more specific goals for learning at this point in the course. What do you hope this assignment will *accomplish* in terms of your goals? Should students gain experience in a particular intellectual process? Is there some specific knowledge or information you want them to acquire? What do you want them to *experience* in the process of doing the assignment? How does this advance your course goals?

3. Draft your goals first in terms of what students will *experience* in doing the assignment. Will they practice observing some phenomenon? Will they engage in some sort of analysis of data? Will they be working with texts, and if so, what specific sorts of things do you want them to do with those texts?

In doing this assignment, my students should *experience* or *practice*:

4. Now think about your learning goals for the assignment in terms of where students should be by the time they are finished. For short, low-stakes assignments, remember that they may not be able to fully realize the goals; that may take several iterations over time, and much practice. But articulating what you hope students should have *learned* or *gained* as a result of doing the assignment will help you to move toward assessment more easily. This also helps you to formulate purpose statements for your assignments: "This assignment is designed to help you to practice/learn/acquire/be better able to ____."

After doing this assignment, my students should have learned/acquired:
