

## Decoding Writing Assignments

If the prompt asks you to....

### Do

### Don't

#### ***Define***

Specify and detail the meaning, characteristics, identify limits, or place into a category.

Craft an argument or discuss subjectively.

#### ***Compare & Contrast***

Consider and analyze similarities or differences.

Do one without the other.

#### ***Analyze***

Break down into parts to gain insight, examine closely and in detail.

Give a summary or description.

#### ***Explain***

Give the facts and theories objectively, providing reasons, causes, effects, implications, and ramifications.

Craft an argument around an explanation if the prompt only calls for you to explain.

#### ***Effects***

Analyze the consequences.

Detail the reasons or focus on explanation or summary.

#### ***Discuss***

Explain and look at in detail; sometimes this also requires some comparison of details.

Argue for or analyze one point of view.

#### ***Summarize***

Distill the topic to its main points, elements or steps.

Just give a detailed description.

#### ***Evaluate***

Make a judgment about the significance or value and support with evidence.

Simply explain, summarize, or compare without taking a position; while evaluation often incorporates explanation or summary, evaluation calls for a value judgment.

#### ***Identify***

Name, indicate, or specify.

Take an argumentative position unless the prompt specifically calls for it.