

The Practical Professor

No. 17

Quick and easy tips, questions, and suggestions for improving teaching and learning.

Transparent Assignments

Teaching Tip Series #5

The Transparency in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education movement is built on a very simple philosophy: *learning is enhanced if students clearly understand the assignment, know the criteria for success, and are told why it matters.*

Too often, our assignments do not clearly state these three things. And yet, we know that people are more motivated when they know what they are supposed to do, have a context for why it is important, and understand how they will be evaluated. In fact we often demand just these things in our own professional lives.

All Transparent Assignments must clearly state the following things:

Purpose: What is the **purpose** of this assignment? Why is it **important** that students learn it? How does this learning task connect to a learning task that will come later in the course, a skill necessary for a program or major, or a career?

Task: What *exactly* is the assignment asking students to **do**? Do not take words like “analyze” for granted: very few of our students know what we mean when we use this word. Search for words like this in your instructions and define them clearly in terms of tasks.

Criteria: How exactly will students be evaluated, how will they know that they have been successful? Can you provide a notated sample of a successful assignment? Can you provide a grading rubric *before* students begin working on the assignment?

For more information, check out the website for the Transparency movement:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

In the next *The Practical Professor*: Reflective Practice Series #5

Also available!

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty

Back Issues

The Top 10...

- No. 1 – The All-Important First Day of Class
- No. 2 – Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier
- No. 3 – The Crucial Second and Third Classes
- No. 4 – Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them
- No. 5 – Promote Effective Student Study Skills
- No. 6 – Components of a Well-Planned Class
- No. 7 – Observe Your Teaching Tendencies
- No. 8 – Ways to Keep Your Students Learning
- No. 9 – Ways to Get Feedback on Teaching from Students
- No. 10 – Using Short Writing to Assess Learning
- No. 11 – Getting More (and Better) Student Questions
- No. 12 – Mixing Things up Mid-Semester
- No. 13 – Engaging Different Input Preferences
- No. 14 – Helping Students Stay the Journey
- No. 15 – Ways to End Your Course
- No. 16 – Resources for Learning and Teaching
- No. 17 – Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus
- No. 18 – Ways to Build Your Students' Self-Efficacy
- No. 19 – Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students
- No. 20 – Laddering Thinking Skills
- No. 21 – Learning Based Ways to End Lessons
- No. 22 – Ways and Reasons to Be Vulnerable While Teaching
- No. 23 – Using Student Groups
- No. 24 – Components of a Complete Learning Experience
- No. 25 – Ways to Use Visuals for Learning
- No. 26 – Students' Locus of Control
- No. 27 – Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments
- No. 28 – Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching
- No. 29 – Teaching to Inspire
- No. 30 – Paths to Mindfulness

Contact your campus Teaching and Learning Consultant (TLC) or e-mail us at:

JFinckel@asnuntuck.edu or WSearle@asnuntuck.edu