

Tips for Effective Assignments

- ➔ **Work with faculty to determine depth, length and number of assignments.** Consider how long an assignment will take to complete and make sure it corresponds to the amount of credit they will receive for completing it. You may want to include the goal of the assignment and the time it will take to complete at the top of the assignment sheet.
- ➔ **Test your assignment** before giving it to students. Ask LIILS staff or another colleague to test it.
- ➔ **Ask students and/or faculty for feedback** in order to improve assignments for the next semester.
- ➔ **Send a copy of your assignment to lib-utref or to the appropriate branch library** so everyone is prepared when students come in asking for help.
- ➔ **Teach concepts, not simply tools.** Students will then be able to apply these concepts to whatever tool they are using. For example, teach them the concept of Boolean searching and have them try it out in a few databases. If you simply teach them all of the tricks, truncation symbols, etc. of one particular database, they will not know how to use any other database.
- ➔ **Map your assignment to course content.** Create assignments that help students reach course goals. For example, create an assignment that teaches them the skills they need to complete a research paper due at end of semester
- ➔ Consult [ACRL's information literacy competencies](#) to help determine learning outcomes for your assignment.
- ➔ Consult **Bloom's Taxonomy** to help structure measurable learning outcomes.
- ➔ Understand the **skill level** of your students and create assignments appropriate to that level. For example, do not assume students know how to search the catalog if they are freshman.
- ➔ Always **define your terms**. For example, if you require peer-reviewed articles, explain what these are.
- ➔ Don't create **scavenger hunts**. They are not effective in teaching students how to do research. In addition, students can easily cheat on these types of assignments.
- ➔ Whenever possible, create assignments in which **students can use their own topics**. They will be more interested in the assignment, and if they have to do a research project later in the semester on their own topic, they will see the relevance of this assignment to that research project.
- ➔ If possible, create assignments that require students to **choose the best tools** to use for their research problem. If you teach them how to choose tools, they can apply this knowledge to other research problems throughout their academic careers.
- ➔ Create assignments that require students to **evaluate the information** they find.
- ➔ **You can't do it all in one assignment!** Choose just a few concepts to cover in each assignment so that you don't overwhelm students.
- ➔ **Include explanations but keep them brief.** One short paragraph per concept should be the limit. Remember that the purpose of the assignment is for them to learn by doing, not by reading.
- ➔ **Avoid a run on a resource.** Do not send all students to the same limited resource.