



Five Prompt Analysis Questions

1. What is the central claim or *topic* called for?
Do I have choices to make with regard to this claim or topic? Will I need to focus the claim or topic in order to write a good essay? What arguments can I make for this claim? What do I know about this topic?
 2. Who is the intended *audience*?
If named specifically, what do I know about this particular audience? If the audience is implied or not identified, what can I infer about it? In either event, how might the expectations of this audience affect my choices as a writer?
 3. What is the *purpose* or *mode* for the writing task?
Is the purpose stated or must it be inferred? What is this writing supposed to accomplish (besides fulfilling the demands of the prompt or assignment)? What does the goal of this writing suggest about the mode (narration, exposition, description, argument) or combination of modes that I should consider in responding?
 4. What *strategies* will be most effective?
What does the purpose or mode suggest about possible strategies? Of the strategies I am comfortable using—like examples, definitions, analysis, classification, cause and effect, compare and contrast—which will be most effective here? Are there any strategies, such as number of examples or type of support, that are specified as required?
 5. What is my *role* as a writer in achieving the purpose?
Have I been assigned a specific role, like *applicant* or *representative*? If I have not been assigned a specific role, what does the prompt or assignment tell me about the level of expertise I should demonstrate, the stance I should assume, or the approach I should take?
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