“If we want students to produce meaningful writing, we must design meaningful assignments, tasks that encourage students to use writing to act.” --Erica Lindemann

1. Consider separating procedural aspects of the assignment sheet from the “promising” or ideational section of the assignment sheet.

2. Use directing verbs precisely. For example, use “analyze” if you want students to break down a concept into component parts for the sake of understanding the whole. Remind your students about the differences in meaning between and among: discuss, survey, compare, evaluate, summarize, explain, etc. Writing is both a cross-curricular and deeply contextual (i.e., disciplinary) act, so try to avoid the pitfall of feeling like teaching about writing is somebody else’s job.

3. Remember that writing is a heuristic: a unique and powerful means of learning. Ask yourself as you construct a writing assignment what you want the students to learn. Prewrite about that. Then design the assignment toward that end. Remember, writing not only shows an instructor what students have learned but also provides an opportunity for students to learn more.

4. Remember that an essay may not always be the most effective way to encourage students to learn; consider other genres and forms of discourse such as letters, memorandums, reports, case studies, newspaper articles, annotated bibliographies, plays, posters, etc.

5. Consider building a publication component into the writing assignment. Remember publication means sharing with the public, so final drafts can be shared on Blackboard, anthologized in a class publication, posted on a blog, etc. Hunt out venues of publication for your students; guide them into a sharing mode.

6. Let students know when various stages of the assignments are due. For example,

   Prewriting due ____
   First draft due ____
   Final draft due ____
   Oral presentation ____

   In other words, sequence writing assignments carefully; provide feedback on the various stages. Help students along the way. In addition consider in-class peer reviews; construct effective peer review guides (a great workshop opportunity!).

7. Clearly explain the length, font, formatting, etc. expectations on the assignment sheet.

8. Provide models as part of your assignment explanation. Some instructors like to provide 2 or more models so students don’t think there is only one “right” way to approach the assignment. (Also see WAC Program handout on Modeling Writing Across the Curriculum.)
9. Construct audience-centered writing assignments; for example, if you are teaching first-year students, be aware of where they are at in the Composition sequence at CSUDH. Ask yourself if your directions are compatible or at cross-purposes with what students are learning in ENG 108-109, 110, 111, etc.

10. Keep in mind that many students at Dominguez Hills are in their first few years of general education studies, and they are currently learning the writing, synthesizing, and research skills and knowledge that will support their academic success.

11. For ESL/EFL and international students, be aware of the various learning experiences they have had, so you can build on those and/or distinguish them from US academic writing conventions and expectations. (Conducting an intake survey is one way to approach this.)

12. **Make time in class to explain the assignment;** ask students if they have questions. _Remember that an assignment sheet is not only a set of directions but can be a way to reinforce learning._

13. If you seek to make your course more writing-centered, make opportunities for group work or collaboration about the writing topics and projects; remember that knowledge can grow out of collaboration and dialogue.

14. Be specific about the formatting system you want your students to use. Avoid assuming too much about students’ familiarity with formatting systems. Ask them what they know. Consider providing students with a mini-lecture or a workshop on MLA, APA, or another system. Be familiar with programs and websites that may help students successfully format papers according to your preferences, e.g., Mendeley, Zotero, etc.

15. Present assignment sheets in the spirit of extending an invitation or a call to submit a paper. Invite students to engage with the course content as researchers, thinkers, and writers.

16. Consider ways to engage student writers as citizens and members of various communities. Remember: the ethos adopted by students, whom they speak or write as, is as important as whom they are speaking or writing to.

17. Strive to make the writing assignment real; struggle to make it relevant and meaningful. Be on the lookout for ideas for engaging writing assignments. Remember: just as writing is a process, so is constructing writing assignments a process. When you’ve completed your assignment, have pride in a job well done!

18. Contact the Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator, Siskanna Naynaha, or Carolyn Caffrey Gardner, the Information Literacy Coordinator, for feedback on any stage of constructing the assignment—from inception through final draft. You can also contact Siskanna for adjacent aspects of writing assignments such as peer review guides and rubrics. You can reach us at: snaynaha@csudh.edu or cgardner@csudh.edu.

*Adapted for the Writing Across the Curriculum Program at CSUDH from a created by Barbara Toth, Alissa Burger, and Beth Kaufka for CTLT at SJSU*