

Approaching an assignment in any discipline

The following three assignments might seem to have nothing in common; but in fact they all use key terms specific to the field, they all use the vocabulary of the field to describe the purpose of the assignment, and they all explain or suggest the kinds of evidence the writers should use.

Environmental Science

The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a worldwide climatic oscillation. Evaluate the scientific issues involved in enhancing our ability to predict ENSO events and current limitations to our forecasting ability. Use scientific papers, abstracts, review articles, and course readings to support your conclusions.

1. Key terms
2. Purpose: to summarize and analyze research findings
3. Appropriate evidence: articles and visuals, especially conflicting data

Anthropology

Compare and contrast the male rites of passage among the Sambia of New Guinea and the Maasai of southern Kenya. Consult ethnographic descriptions of Sambia and Maasai rituals in course readings.

1. Key terms
2. Purpose: to analyze similarities and differences
3. Appropriate evidence: anthropologists' field research

Business

Develop a position in response to the following question: Do corporate takeovers (changes in corporate control) create or destroy value? To determine how these value changes come about, analyze case studies and Securities and Exchange Commission documents.

1. Key terms
2. Purpose: to analyze certain evidence and to argue a position based on that analysis
3. Appropriate evidence: examples of corporate takeovers

(continued)

Once you have determined the expectations of a writing assignment, you must be sure to do the following, regardless of the discipline you are writing in.

- Determine your audience and purpose.
- Ask questions appropriate to the field.
- Formulate a thesis.
- Gather evidence. Conduct research if necessary.
- Identify the required citation style.