



Turning Prompts into Outlines

Students will analyze a prompt before picking up an assigned text to get an idea of how to read and interact with it. To better understand their reading and writing task, students will mark their prompts and then use a table like the one below to build a rough outline.

The “Do/What Outline”¹ can be used to help identify all aspects of a writing task while giving you an outline that can be used to organize and develop a paper. Review the steps below before completing a “Do/What Outline.”

1. Analyze and mark the prompt, circling verbs and underlining what those verbs ask you to do.
2. Use what you have circled and underlined to complete a “Do/What Outline.” List the verbs in the prompt in an order that makes sense to you and your reader.
3. Use your marked prompt and “Do/What Outline” to drive your purpose for reading. You will need to strategically select reading strategies that will help you accurately respond to the prompt.
4. Once you have actively read your text, go back and complete the “Do/What Outline” with details from the text.

Do	What
<hr/> (Record 1st Verb)	<hr/> (Write what the prompt asks you to do) A. <hr/> (Main Claims or Main Ideas) 1. <hr/> (Evidence or Details from the text) 2. <hr/> (Evidence or Details from the text) B. <hr/> 1. <hr/> 2. <hr/>
<hr/> (Record 2nd Verb)	Continue building an outline for all elements in the prompt.

¹ This “Do/What Outline” was adapted from The California State University’s Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC). The “Do/What” chart appears in CSU ERWC assignment sequences.



“Do/What Outline” Template

Use this “Do/What Outline”¹ to help you analyze a prompt and prepare for a writing task.

Verb/Directive Words	Describe what you are asked to do.
I.	A. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____ B. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____
II.	A. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____ B. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____

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“Do/What Outline” Template

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Verb/Directive Words	Describe what you are asked to do.
III.	A. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____ B. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____
IV.	A. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____ B. _____ 1. _____ 2. _____

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