**Understanding a Writing Prompt—There is a Process**

By following a few steps, you can better understand the requirements for the assignment. The prompt is what gets the writer thinking about what they will write, but it is often in a number of parts.

* **Read the prompt the entire way through once.** This gives you an overall view of what is going on.
* **Underline or circle the portions that you absolutely must know.** This information may include due date, page length, and format (the form the writing will take).
* **Underline or circle important phrases.** You should know your instructor at least a little by now - what phrases does she use in class? Does she repeatedly say a specific word? If these are in the prompt, you know the instructor wants you to use them in the assignment.
* **Think about how you will address the prompt.** The prompt contains clues on how to write the assignment. Your instructor will often describe the ideas she wants discussed either in questions, in bullet points, or in the text of the prompt. Think about each of these sentences and number them so that you can write a paragraph or section of your essay on that portion if necessary.
* **Rank ideas in descending order, from most important to least important.** Instructors may include more questions or talking points than you can cover in your assignment, so rank them in the order you think is more important. One area of the prompt may be more interesting to you than another.
  + **(Adapted from Purdue Owl Writing Center materials, 2011)**