

# Assignment Genres: Writing a Case Analysis

Your first writing step is to make sure you understand the assignment.

## Read the prompt and ask yourself:

<b>Why was this assigned?</b>	Professors design assignments with specific learning objectives in mind. Does your professor intend for you to learn how to write a literature review, a research proposal, or a policy memo? Is your task to demonstrate your understanding of a concept, or to practice critiquing a theory?
<b>What am I being asked to do?</b>	<p>Most prompts contain key verbs, or action words, that help you determine the main tasks. The <a href="#">University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</a> divides these words into three categories: <i>information</i>, <i>relation</i>, and <i>interpretation</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Information words</b> ask you to demonstrate your knowledge about a subject. Examples include define, describe, explain, illustrate, summarize, trace, and research.</li><li>• <b>Relation words</b> ask you to show connections between ideas. Compare, contrast, apply, cause, and relate fall into this category.</li><li>• <b>Interpretation words</b> ask for you to defend your own argument, thesis, or idea. These words include assess, prove, justify, evaluate, respond, support, synthesize, analyze, and argue.</li></ul>
<b>What evidence is required?</b>	Some assignments, like a reflective memo, may not require any formal evidence. More often, though, assignments will ask you to draw on outside research or other types of evidence.

## About case analyses

A case analysis is usually a shorter assignment, or part of a larger project such as a program proposal. You receive a case, usually a narrative or set of artifacts (e.g. data, supporting documents, exhibits, images or videos). Cases may be real or fictional, but mimic a realistic scenario that provides rich material for analysis.

In your paper, you will critically examine issues related to the themes of the course. Oftentimes, case assignments require you to think deeply about the specific context or circumstances described.

*For any two of the assigned cases, prepare a five- to six-page (double-spaced) analysis that: (a) outlines the central issue(s) or problem(s) the case presents; and (b) describes a*

*recommended course of action and rationale, support by readings beyond those assigned. In brief, your case analysis should answer the following questions: What are the key problems, challenges, and/or opportunities here? What is at stake for whom? Who should do (or not do) what, and why? It is not necessary to restate the basic facts or context of the case.*

## Reading the prompt

<b>Format</b>	As you can see, students will write 5-6 pages in response to specific guiding questions. It is usually acceptable to use these as sub-headers to structure your paper (e.g., "The problem," "What's at stake," "Key challenges and opportunities").
<b>Evidence</b>	The writer must use course readings and independent research to support and justify their recommendations.
<b>Audience</b>	The audience may be academic, policy, or practitioner depending on the case. Academic is the most common, but you might analyze a program evaluation as a case for a policy audience, or a recorded lesson as a case for practitioners.
<b>Purpose</b>	The key word, "analysis," is an interpretation word, which means you must defend your own argument about what was done well or poorly and why. The prompt also asks you to "outline" the central issues, an information word that asks you to demonstrate your understanding of the material by correctly identifying the main themes.