

Breaking Down the Prompt

1. Read through the question.
2. Mark all words telling you what to do. (e.g. **Analyze** and **describe** the author's use of imagery, diction, and metaphor in proving his point in *The Great Gatsby*.)
3. This is the task, and these words describe **how** you will write the answer that this prompt requires. These words detail how to formulate an appropriate response to the question. Write these in the spaces provided. If you are unsure as to what these words mean, look them up in the dictionary and define them below.

_____ : _____
_____ : _____
_____ : _____

4. Next, look at **what** you are writing about. (e.g. **Analyze** and **describe** the author's use of **imagery, diction**, and **metaphor** in proving his point in *The Great Gatsby*.) These are the topics you are expected to discuss in your essay. Write these in the spaces provided. If you're unsure as to what these words mean, look them up and define them below.

_____ : _____
_____ : _____
_____ : _____

5. Write a statement about the main idea of your paper that answers the question by addressing all parts of the prompt that you marked. This is your thesis. If you need help, ask your tutor how to write a thesis statement or refer to another worksheet. A thesis statement provides the framework for your essay, so make sure to do a good job on this part!

Now begin outlining your paper – again, if you need help ask your tutor or refer to another document. You have successfully broken down the prompt, so now it is time to plan your essay! Each topic you marked can serve as a paragraph. Keep in mind that to answer the question to your professor's satisfaction, you must approach the problem from the angle that you marked as the task.

I. **Opening Paragraph:** Introduce your topic and set the framework for your answer. End this paragraph with your thesis.

II. **Thesis**

III. **Part I:** _____

A. This part is all about introducing your first topic and supporting it.

IV. **Part II:** _____

A. Introduce and support.

V. **Part III:** _____

A. Introduce and support.

VI. **Conclusion:** How can you bring all of your ideas together and leave the reader with a summary of your ideas/argument? Write your ideas below:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

6. Now it is time to write your paper by expanding upon this outline.

7. Remember to look over your answer one last time to make sure that it stays **on track**, **answers** all parts of the question, is well **supported**, **flows** well, and is **proofread** for any minor errors.

8. Come back to the Writing Center to have a tutor help you improve your writing even more!