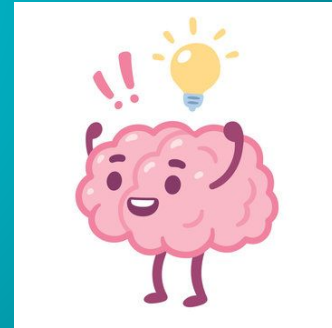
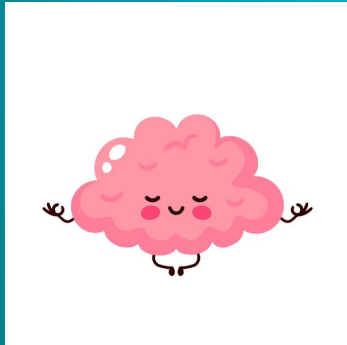


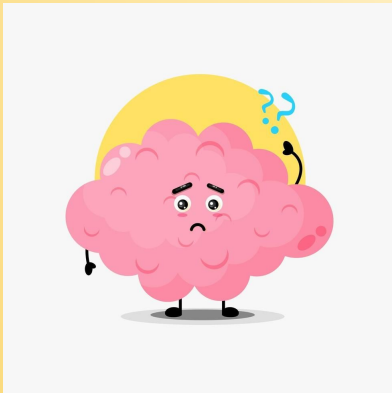
Crafting Effective Writing Prompts

Best practices that will help students respond
with more confidence and clarity!



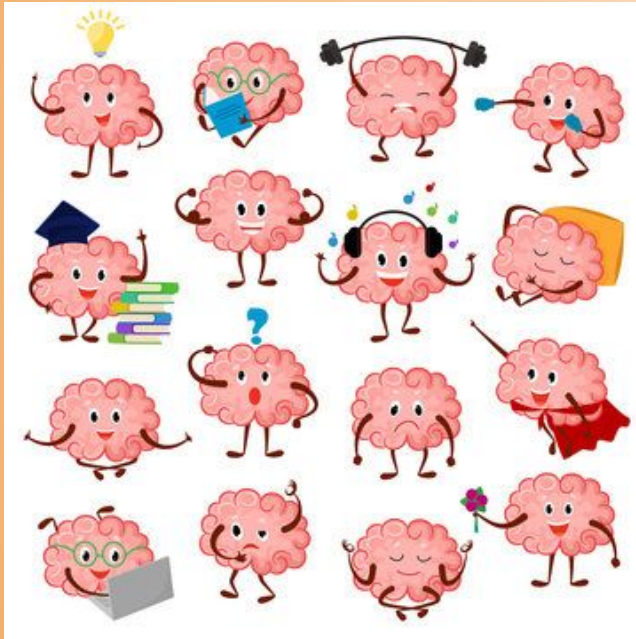
WHAT MAKES A PROMPT INEFFECTIVE?

- *Visual disorganization (no perceptual salience - nothing stands out/no headings)
- *Lack of a clear task or focus/vague language (no instructional verbs or question)
- *Too broad or too narrow (too many choices or no choices at all)
- *Lack of context (no connection to SLOs/Objectives, purpose, or previous work)
- *Lack of instruction or scaffolding (format, research, paragraph structure, etc.)



Ineffective prompts can be confusing for students, leading to lack of effort, structure, organization, focus, and, ultimately, more frustrating grading with fewer passing grades and more revisions needed (if revision is an option).

Quick Reminders: An Effective Prompt is Inclusive and Equitable



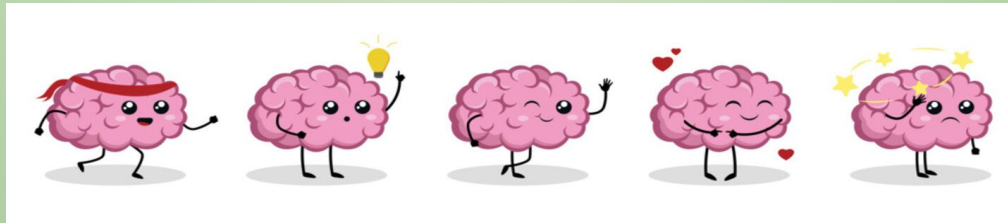
Prompts should be written so that every single student can bring their experience and understanding to the topic, regardless of culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. Prompts should not perpetuate stereotypes, bias, or microaggressions of any kind.

Just as we ask our students to be mindful of their audience, so should we be mindful of our audience of students when crafting a prompt.

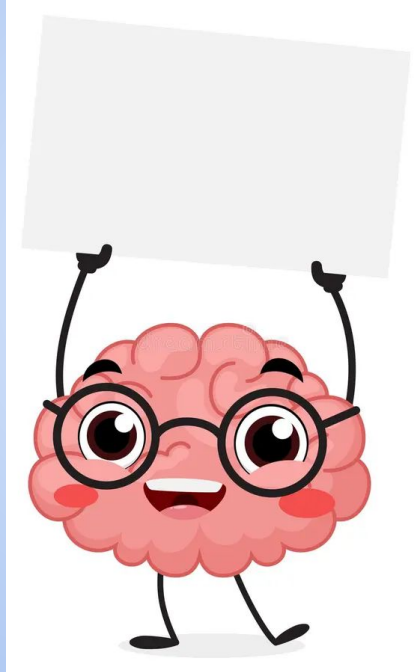
Equitable vs. Inclusive Language

*Using equitable language means you are aware of common stereotypes, biases, and offensive language surrounding a group of people, and you're working hard to avoid them. It means you're [using] a lens that sees all people as equal" (Gates 2024).

*Inclusive language demonstrates that not all people have an equal voice in the world, and your prompt makes it possible for every student's voice to be heard (Gates 2024).



The following are some best practices of creating a writing prompt!



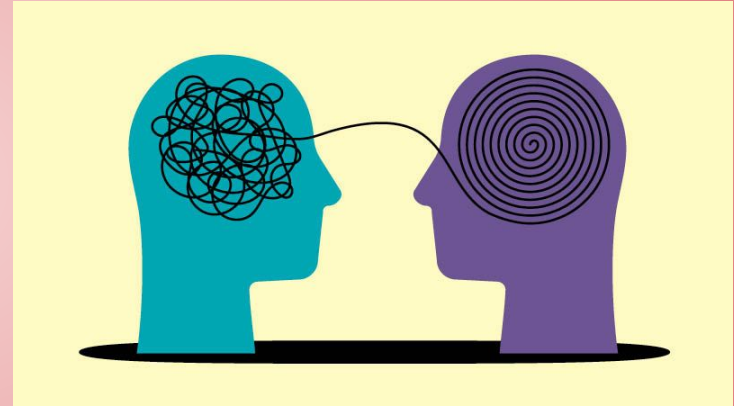
(Pssst...these are all equitable, inclusive practices!)

Perceptual Salience and Organization

Just as our syllabi are constructed so that different parts are easy to find and all necessary information is included, so should our prompts be constructed.

This may include:

- * Headings and/or boxes
- * Boldfaced or highlighted text
- * Logically sequenced sections



These aspects are particularly helpful for students with developing language skills, students with learning disabilities, and visual learners.

Clarity of Task and Steps

Students should be able to identify exactly what their purpose is and what steps or stages are involved.

This may include:

- *A short context statement at the beginning that clarifies how the assignment fits in with the work they've previously done in the class and the work they will be doing in the future.**
- *Use of instructional verbs so that students know exactly what kind of essay they are writing (see handout!)**
- *A clearly worded question or a couple of questions that you want them to answer in a thesis statement. (Too many questions leads to confusion.)**
- *A list of steps or stages they should follow. The more scaffolding there is, the more chances students have to succeed at the steps.**

Creating an Inclusive Question/Task

Students don't come to us as blank slates; they have expertise of their own. To assume they don't is deficit thinking. Therefore, allow opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and experience regardless of background, which is the foundation of asset-based teaching.

This may include:

- *Flexibility and variety by allowing students to choose their topic or focus, within reason
- *Creating open-ended prompt questions that allow for personal reflection and connection

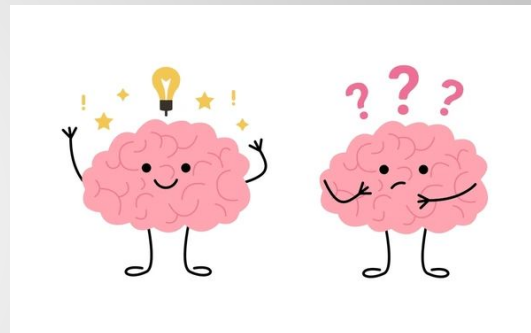
Note: For the first 1A essay, limiting choices may be helpful for students. We feel the first essay should be very prescriptive for those who haven't written an essay in a while or those who would benefit from a review of basic essay structure and expectations.

Transparency Regarding Expectations and Requirements

There should be no mystery as to what the necessary components of a passing grade are and what the constraints of the assignment are.

This may include:

- *How many drafts and/or revisions are required
- *All due dates and submission requirements
- *How the essay will be assessed (grading rubric)
- *Which SLOs/Objectives will be assessed
- *Specific formatting and length requirements
- *Whether or not outside research is needed and if so, what types of sources are acceptable.
- *Model paragraphs or templates
- *Resources for getting help with these components (library, workshops, tutoring, WRC, etc.)



Optional Ideas for Getting the Best Essays Possible:

- *If your class has a f2f component, consider providing hard copies of the prompt and annotating it with the class on the doc cam.**
- *If your class is online, consider recording yourself going over the prompt, emphasizing the most important parts.**
- *Pass out index cards and tell students to write down a question about the prompt; project the questions on the doc cam and answer them.**
- *Create a discussion board about the prompt for questions**
- *Provide a sample paragraph or essay that is non-passing and have students evaluate why it does not adhere to the prompt**
- *If you are asking your students to visit a writing tutor, send your prompt to Nikki along with anything you would like the tutors to focus on!**

Sample Prompts

Email nicole.capps@norcocollege.edu

Or

jeanine.reed@rccd.edu

to get some samples!

Sources Used

<https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/diversity-inclusion/equitable-assignments/index.html>

<https://writershivemedia.com/inclusive-and-equitable-language-in-writing/>

<https://medium.com/@sravani.thota/best-practices-for-writing-prompts-1a79aa9a4a34>

<https://cetl.uconn.edu/resources/teaching-and-learning-assessment/teaching-and-learning-assessment-overview/assessment-design/developing-writing-prompts/>

Thank you for coming to our presentation!

