



Divide Larger Assignments Into Manageable Chunks

Research shows that repeated successes build students' expectations of achieving mastery (Darby, 2019). Dividing larger assignments into manageable chunks allowing students the opportunity to develop and build skills throughout the course, while also providing numerous opportunities to obtain and act on feedback, helps to develop their confidence (Darby, 2019).

Creating an assignment plan outlining each of the steps needed to complete the larger assignment helps students get started on their work, plan their time effectively, and avoid procrastination (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). Students feel more capable and confident when they know how to manage their time and are able to obtain and act on feedback for each of the component pieces (Nilson & Goodson, 2021). To accomplish this, divide assignments into interim tasks and assign due dates or check-ins for each task. It may also be helpful to spend time in class or create a video to share suggested timelines for the smaller sections in order to meet larger deadlines.

Provide Feedback

This structured approach for dividing larger assignments into manageable chunks is also helpful in allowing you to provide students with feedback on content and process. This will help ensure that students are on track, understanding the expectations, and making progress toward successfully completing the larger assignment. You may also consider incorporating peer-to-peer review and feedback for some of the smaller, well-defined components of an assignment.

Example

The table below provide an example of a summative, final, or larger assignment and how it is divided into manageable chunks.

Final Assignment for Psychology 101: You will write a research paper about a mental illness (chosen from those discussed in class) and the treatment options available as well as a well-developed argument either for or against popular treatment options. The assignment has been divided into smaller tasks, each with a due date. Each of these tasks will be graded and you will be provided with feedback designed to help prepare you to write a successful final paper.

Task	Due date	Points
Identify topic	February 6	5
Select five research sources	February 24	5
Identify main points of paper's argument	March 1	10
Develop essay outline	March 15	5
Write thesis statement	March 30	10
Submit first draft of paper	April 20	15
Submit final draft with revisions based on instructor feedback	May 12	50

Sources

Boettcher, J. V., & Conrad, R.-M. (2016). *The online teaching survival guide: Simple and practical pedagogical tips* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Darby, F. (with Lang, J. M.). (2019). *Small teaching online: Applying learning science in online classes*. Jossey-Bass.

Nilson, L. B., & Goodson, L. A. (2021). *Online teaching at its best: Merging instructional design with teaching and learning research* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.