

Introduction

Instructions play a central role in students' experiences and performances in assessments. For this reason, it is important to realise the need to unpack assessment instructions. This unit provides you with strategies that will enable you to understand instructions and maximise your performance in assessments.

Learning Content

1. Relationship between instructions and performance in assessments

There is a strong relationship between assessment instructions and students' performance. Assessment instructions are like gatekeepers in terms of students' entry into and satisfactory performance in assessments. In other words, a student who does not take the time to understand assessment instructions may perform poorly, despite having a good knowledge of the content subject. Student who understand instructions tend to perform fairly well, because they are able to satisfy the requirements of the assessment. On the contrary, students who do not understand instructions tend to perform below their potential, since their submission does not meet the expectations of the assessment. Hence, it becomes important to understand assessment instructions before putting pen to paper or typing one's answer.

2. Importance of understanding instructions

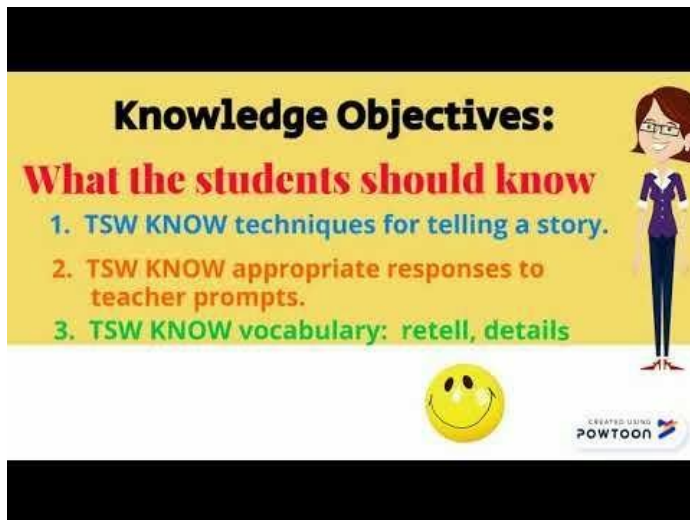
Instructions tell students the action to take, the content to include, the supporting tools, and the extent to which they need to go. Thus, students who have good content knowledge may still perform poorly because they do not know what to do, how much of the content to include, do not pay attention to the visual aids/ supporting tools, and fail to stop where they should. Conversely, students who understand assessment instructions are able to perform at a satisfactory level because they satisfy most of the requirements of the assessment in terms of what to do, what to include, what to refer to, and where to stop.

3. Steps to take to understand assessment instructions

When presented with assessment instructions, students need to take a number of important steps that will ensure that they understand assessment instructions clearly -- before engaging with the task. These necessary steps are as follows:

- Speed-read the full instructions
- Slowly read the full instructions again
 - Identify any difficult words and look them up in a dictionary
 - Read the full instructions yet again with a better language understanding
 - Identify task words signalled by verbs (circle them), content/subject words represented by nouns (underline them), assistance/aid words often beginning with prepositions (square bracket them), and limiting/scope words that are generally phrases introduced by prepositions (box them)
 - Analyse each of the above word categories
 - Establish what is expected of you in the assessment: global understanding of the instruction.

Click on the links below and watch the videos on how to unpack assessment instructions or standards.



Knowledge Objectives:
What the students should know

1. TSW KNOW techniques for telling a story.
2. TSW KNOW appropriate responses to teacher prompts.
3. TSW KNOW vocabulary: retell, details

The slide features a yellow background with a cartoon woman on the right, a yellow smiley face at the bottom, and a 'POWTOON' logo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goer1PKF9sU>



A hand-drawn illustration on a white background. A hand is shown drawing a cloud. To the left, there is a drawing of an angel and a cartoon man's head. The drawing is done with simple lines and colors.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXivHaL_zuk

Resources

Resource	Format	Time needed	Link
Unpacking the question	PDF	5 mins	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1CpLYrQbj11SjHzPb1AvFq6DOT3O-rBW6

Summary

Students' performance in assessments is strongly linked to their ability to make sense of assessment instructions. Understanding instructions is thus important as it determines what students do, the content that they include, the tools that they use, and where their task

begins and stops. The process of understanding assessment instructions can be summarised in seven steps, in the context of this unit of the module.