

# How to Analyze a Reading

College assignments often ask you to think critically by “analyzing,” “inferring” or “interpreting” some article or other reading. Understanding exactly what these terms mean can help you as you plan a paper or a class presentation. Next time you are asked to analyze a reading, look over these definitions and use them to plan out your response

## Evaluate

- When **evaluating**, you decide whether something is good, bad, accurate, misleading, worth buying, worth seeing, and so on. When you see a movie, and you tell someone else that it’s good, great, or lousy, you are giving your **evaluation** of that movie. You often add the reason why you did or didn’t like it—the plot was funny, there was too much violence, you liked the characters, and so forth. In the same way, when you **evaluate** something you read, you **give your opinion** of its value. You should be able to *point to a reason why* you have that opinion—for example, the writer was logical (or illogical), the story was interesting (or boring), the point made was important (or not important). Be prepared to share your reason for your opinion.

## Infer

- When **inferring**, you pick up a meaning that is not specifically stated or written out. For instance, if you read: “This dog that I am taking care of is big, smelly, dirty, noisy, and has chewed up my best shoes,” then you can **infer** that the writer does not like taking care of the dog, even though this is not specifically written. “**Inferring**” is often referred to as “**reading between the lines.**”

## Interpret

- When **interpreting**, you express *in your own words* the meaning of something you’ve just read. You might **interpret** a very long poem, for example, by stating in a few short sentences your understanding of what the poem means or says. You can make your interpretations very short and concise or very long and creative. It’s your own personal interpretation. Be prepared, however, to be able to point to some words or phrases that influenced you to form your particular interpretation.