

The DECIDE Framework: Assignment Design Tool

Transform one assignment to make student thinking visible

Start Here

Choose one assignment you already use. Do not redesign everything. Work with something real.

Assignment: Argumentative Essay

Context: High School English / Intro Composition

Student Task:

Write a 3–5 page argumentative essay with a clear thesis, supporting evidence, and conclusion.

What Does This Assignment Currently Show?

When students complete this task, what can you actually see?

Check all that apply:

- Final answer or product
- Organization of ideas
- Some evidence of understanding
- Clear reasoning process
- Decision-making and justification

What Might Be Missing?

- How the student chose their argument
- Whether they evaluated alternative ideas
- How their thinking changed over time
- Why they structured the essay the way they did

The Problem: The essay may be strong. But the thinking behind it is mostly invisible.

Reframing the Goal

Instead of asking, “Did the student complete the essay?” We ask:

What kinds of judgment should be visible?

- evaluate competing arguments
- justify their thesis
- revise based on comparison
- explain key decisions

Apply the DECIDE Framework

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| D | Deliberate Comparison How will students compare options? | Students compare their essay to an AI-generated response on the same prompt and identify key differences. |
| E | Explain Reasoning How will students explain their thinking? | Students explain how they developed their thesis and structured their argument. |
| C | Challenge Errors How will students identify and revise errors? | Students identify weaknesses in the AI-generated response and revise one section of their own essay. |
| I | Identify Decision Points Where did judgment happen? | Students highlight one moment where they changed their argument or structure. |
| D | Defend Choices How will students justify their decisions? | Students justify one key decision, such as their thesis, evidence, or organization. |
| E | Examine Alternatives How will students consider other possibilities? | Students describe one approach they considered but did not use and explain why. |

Your Redesigned Assignment

Now rewrite your assignment directions with one or more DECIDE elements included.

Original assignment (brief):

Write a 3–5 page argumentative essay with a clear thesis, supporting evidence, and conclusion.

Revised assignment (include judgment prompts):

Submit:

- your final essay
- one comparison with an AI-generated or alternative response
- a short explanation of one major decision you made
- one revision you made after comparison
- one alternative you considered but rejected

What Will Now Be Visible?

After this change, what will you be able to see that you could not before?

- how the student evaluated ideas
- how they made decisions
- how their thinking changed

Not just what they wrote. But how they arrived there.

