



Assignment Sheet: Analysis of Discourse Community Characteristics

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1. BACKGROUND

After reading one author's conceptualization of what it takes to make a *discourse community*, your job is to select a group of people you believe meets Swales' six defining characteristics and answer this question: **How does the group you chose exhibit the characteristics of a discourse community?** Present your conclusions in a paper at least two pages long.

2. PURPOSE

This assignment will help you understand what a discourse community is and how one of them functions. You will learn to think deeply about the use of written communication within a group, and you will examine how a group functions.

3. REQUIRED READING

For this assignment, you will need to read "The Concept of Discourse Community" by John Swales, pages 466–80 of your *Writing about Writing* (WAW) text.

TABLE 1. Evaluation Rubric

Great	Evaluates how the combination of characteristics creates a sense of group identity
Good	Illustrates a hierarchy of characteristics within the group
Okay	Explains, using examples, how the chosen group meets the characteristics
Poor	States that the chosen group is a discourse community in terms of the characteristics
Bad	Omits any claim that the chosen group qualifies as a discourse community

4. PROCEDURE

For this assignment, you are applying the characteristics identified by Swales on pages 471–73 of your WAW textbook. Show that a specific group you have been a part of is a discourse community.

- Before you write,
 - (1) brainstorm several groups you are (or have been) in that you think might be considered discourse communities and
 - (2) consider how those groups use text and language, then choose one group to study.
- In your paper,
 - (1) show how the group you chose possesses each of the six defining characteristics from Swales and
 - (2) find connections between characteristics to show how they help the group function.
- To make your paper exceptional, also
 - (1) identify which characteristics have greater priority than others, perhaps for group function or for new members seeking membership and
 - (2) show how the combination of those six characteristics form the group's sense of identity.

5. EVALUATION

Your task for this assignment is to identify a specific group of people as being a discourse community. Your work will be assessed using the evaluation criteria presented in Table 1.