

Developing and Using Rubrics

What is a Rubric?

A rubric is a scoring tool used to assess student performance based upon a criteria and consists of the following three components:

1. **criteria:** the characteristics of performance (e.g., thesis statement, organization, evidence)
2. **levels of performance:** the degree to which a student is expected to meet a given criteria (e.g., exceeded expectations, met expectations, did not meet expectations)
3. **descriptors:** specific explanation linked to each criteria and level of performance. the characteristics associated with each dimension

Rubrics can be used to provide feedback to students on diverse types of assignments, from papers, projects, and oral presentations to artistic performances and group projects.

Benefits of using rubrics

The benefits of using rubrics in courses can be observed by both instructors and students.

Research indicates that rubrics:

- Help clarify vague, fuzzy goals
- Help students understand your expectations
- Help students self-improve
- Inspire better student performance
- Make scoring easier and faster
- Make scoring more accurate, unbiased, and consistent
- Improve feedback to students
- Reduce arguments with students Improve feedback to faculty and staff

Types of Rubrics

Analytic rubrics

An analytic rubric articulates levels of performance for each criterion to allow the instructor to assess student performance and provide specific feedback on several dimensions of an assignment (e.g., thesis, organization, mechanics, etc.) along specific levels of performance (e.g., exceeded expectations, met expectations, did not meet expectations). They provide useful feedback on areas of strength and weakness and criterion can be weighted to reflect the relative importance of each dimension. However, they takes more time to develop and apply than a holistic rubric and raters may not arrive at the same score if each point for every criterion is not well defined.

	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Score
Describe	Provides incomplete or inaccurate information on the subject matter; serious structural and composition errors	Provides partial information on the subject matter, several grammatical errors	Provides complete and accurate information on the subject matter; good command of structure, composition and grammar	
Analyze	Has trouble relating concepts and providing meaning, lacks evidence support	Provides limited proficiency of how concepts related; overlooks relationships	Accurately relates how concepts function together	
Evaluate	Heavy use of unsupported personal opinion to judge the quality of work	Limited use of citations, relies on opinion to draw conclusions	Uses multiple citations and is able to vet the importance of the citation	

Holistic rubrics

A holistic rubric reflects a level of performance by assessing performance across multiple criteria as a whole in order to provide specific feedback on a defined, single dimension of an assignment (e.g., critical thinking) along specific levels of performance (e.g., exceeded expectations, met expectations, did not meet expectations). These type of rubrics save time since the number of decisions rater make is minimized and can be applied consistently by trained raters, thus increasing reliability. However, it may be difficult to select the best description especially when student work is at varying levels and criteria cannot be weighted.

4 Consistency does all of the following: accurately interprets evidence and statements and identifies salient arguments. Analyzes alternative major points of view and draws warranted conclusions by justifying key results.
3 Does 3/4 of above
2 Does 1/2 of above

1 Offers biased interpretations and fails to identify key points. Ignores obvious alternative points of view and argues using unwarranted claims; does not justify results and either fails to provide conclusions or defends views based on pre-conceptions

Developing Rubrics

Below are important points/questions to consider while constructing a rubric:

1. **What is the purpose of the rubric?**

It is very important to define the goals for which you intend to develop a rubric. Do you intend to use it to grade students' assignment/project or provide feedback or both? Is the rubric meant for a simple learning task or a major/complex project?

2. **What type of rubric do you prefer to use?**

The choice of a rubric type will depend on the nature of the assignment you need to score using a rubric. Do you need to use an analytic rubric and, therefore, provide students feedback and detailed score, or do you need a holistic rubric to allow for broad feedback and overall sense of students' performance?

3. **What are your criteria?**

The criteria in a rubric should reflect observable and measurable expectations relative to the task/assignment for which you are developing a rubric. Each criterion should be different from the other, and should be stated in a precise, unambiguous language.

4. **What is your rating scale?**

How will you determine various levels of student performance? How many rating scales do you plan to have in the rubric? Do the rating scales reflect the purpose of the rubric?

Does your rubric have descriptors?

Descriptors should be observable and measurable, and distinct from each other. They should show "growth" or "progression" from lower levels of performance to higher levels of performance, and should be written in a consistent and parallel language