

## How to Create Rubrics

(Based on Introduction to Rubrics: An Assessment Tool to Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback, and Promote Student Learning by Stevens and Levi 2005; Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004; and Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: shifting the focus from teaching to learning by Huba and Freed 2000)

Format for a rubric:

Task Description: \_\_\_\_\_

	Scale Level 1	Scale Level 2	Scale Level 3
Dimension 1			
Dimension 2			
Dimension 3			
Etc			

A rubric involves four components:

### Part 1: *Task Description*

- Involves a “performance” of some sort by the student
- The task can take the form of a specific assignment; e.g., a paper, a poster, a presentation
- The task can take the form of overall behavior; e.g., participation, use of proper lab protocols, behavioral expectations in the classroom

### Part 2: *Scale*

- Describes how well or poorly any given task has been performed
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*Example:*

*Task: Each student will make a 5-minute presentation on the changes in one community over the past 30 years. The student may focus the presentation in any way he or she wishes, but there needs to be a thesis of some sort, not just a chronological exposition. The presentation should include appropriate photographs, maps, graphs, and other visual aids for the audience.*

	Excellent	Competent	Needs work
Knowledge/understanding 20%			
Thinking/inquiry 30%			
Communication 20%			
Use of visual aids 20%			
Presentation skills 10%			

Part 4: *Description of the Dimensions*

- A rubric should contain at the very least a description or the highest level of performance in that dimension
- Scoring Guide Rubric = a rubric that contains only the description of the highest level of performance

*Example Scoring Guide Rubric:* (includes description of dimensions at the highest level of performance)

*Task: Each student will make a 5-minute presentation on the changes in one community over the past 30 years. The student may focus the presentation in any way he or she wishes, but there needs to be a thesis of some sort, not just a chronological exposition. The presentation should include appropriate photographs, maps, graphs, and other visual aids for the audience.*

	Criteria	Comments	Points
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*Example Three-level Rubric: (includes description of dimensions with all levels of performance described)*

*Task: Each student will make a 5-minute presentation on the changes in one community over the past 30 years. The student may*

- f) What evidence can students provide in this assignment that would show they have accomplished what you hoped they would accomplish when you created the assignment?
  - g) What are the highest expectations you have for student performance on this assignment overall?
  - h) What is the worst fulfillment of the assignment you can imagine short of simply not turning it in at all?
2. *Listing.* In this stage, we focus on the particular details of the assignment and what specific learning objectives we hope to see in the completed assignment.  
Answers to (d)-(e)-(f) above regarding skills required, the exact nature of the task, and the types of evidence of learning are most often a good starting point to generate this list. Once the learning goals have been listed, you add a description of the *highest* level of performance you expect for each learning goal. These will later contribute to the “Descriptions of Dimensions” on a finished rubric.
3. *Grouping and Labeling.* In this stage, we organize the results of our reflections in Stages 1 and 2, grouping similar expectations together in what will probably become the rubric dimensions. Start with the *highest* performance expectations completed in Stage 2 and group together items which are related. Once the performance descriptions are in groups of similar skills, read them and start to find out what is common across the group and label it. These labels will ultimately become dimensions on the rubric – it is important to keep them clear and neutral; e.g., “Organization”, “Analysis”, or “Citations”.
4. *Application.* In this stage, we apply the dimensions and descriptions from Stage 3 to the final form of the rubric, utilizing the matrix/grid format.

Once you have identified what you are assessing; e.g., critical thinking, here are steps for creating holistic rubrics:

- Identify the characteristics of what you are assessing; e.g., appropriate use of evidence, recognition of logical fallacies
- Describe the best work you could expect using these characteristics – this describes the top category
- Describe the worst acceptable product using these characteristics – this describes the lowest acceptable category
- Describe an unacceptable product – this describes the lowest category
- Develop descriptions of intermediate-level products and assign them to intermediate categories. You might decide to develop a scale with five levels; e.g., unacceptable, marginal, acceptable, competent, outstanding, or three levels; e.g., novice, competent, exemplary, or any other set that is meaningful.
- Ask colleagues who were not involved in the rubric’s development to apply it to some products or behaviors and revise as needed to eliminate ambiguities.

Example:

**HOLISTIC rubric for assessing student essays**  
(Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004)

**Developing Useful Rubrics: Questions to Ask and Actions to Implement**  
 (Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: shifting the focus from teaching to learning by Huba and Freed 2000)

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	What criteria or essential elements must be present in the student's work to ensure that it is high in quality? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These should be the criteria that distinguish good work from poor work</li> </ul>	Include these as rows in your rubric
2	How many levels of achievement do I wish to illustrate for students? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The levels should generally describe a range of achievement varying from excellent to unacceptable               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example: exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable</li> <li>○ Example: sophisticated, competent, partly competent, not yet competent</li> <li>○ Example: distinguished, proficient, intermediate, novice</li> <li>○ Example: accomplished, average, developing, beginning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Include these as columns in your rubric and label them
3	For each criterion or essential element of quality, what is a clear description of performance at each achievement level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid undefined terms (e.g., "significant", "trivial", "shows considerable thought")</li> <li>• Avoid value-laden terms (e.g., "excellent", "poor")</li> <li>• Use objective descriptions that help provide guidance to the students for getting better when needed</li> </ul>	Include descriptions in the appropriate cells of the rubric
4	What are the consequences of performing at each level of quality?	Add descriptions of consequences to the commentaries in the rubric

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