

Rubrics and Scoring Criteria

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What is a rubric?

When and why do you use a rubric?

A rubric allows someone to evaluate the information collected by assessment. In a typical traditional test, it's rather simple to evaluate: You count how many answers are right or wrong by a predetermined “key”, and you calculate the resulting score which results in a “grade.”

On the other hand, when you assign a less obvious task such as an essay, a project, a performance, a portfolio, or an exhibit, you can't just count “right” and “wrong” answers. You have to make evaluative judgments based on *some* criteria.

An effective way to frame the criteria is to create a rubric. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th ed.*, the word *rubric* means “an authoritative rule” or “an explanatory or introductory commentary.” A rubric basically defines the criteria by which a work is evaluated and provides different levels of performance for each criterion. It defines the range of quality. Also, it establishes some degree of validity and reliability in evaluating works that lend themselves to subjectivity in evaluation.

Rubrics may be designed for a specific task or may be created for general use.

There are two types of rubrics:

- (1) Holistic – has one general descriptor for each level of performance as a whole
- (2) Analytic – has descriptors for each level of performance for multiple criteria that are delineated

When creating descriptors, you should:

Use rich, descriptive language that provides enough discrimination between levels of performance to allow other evaluators or students to verify their score, accurately self-assess, and self-correct. Avoid vague words such as “good,” “excellent,” “sufficient,” and “adequate.” Rather, describe what these might be with respect to the task.

When choosing criteria, you should:

Use criteria that reflect the goals of the task. For example, if the task is to write an essay, what goals of the learning would be important? Perhaps coherence, form, punctuation, and content would be important. If the task was to perform a musical piece on piano, the criteria might be very different.

It is helpful to discuss the rubric with students *before* the assessment, so they are aware of how they will be evaluated. It may even be helpful to have students work with you to create the rubric, as they will very likely invest themselves more fully in the assessment process.

Rubrics and Scoring Guides

Rubrics generally provide descriptors for different levels of performance on an assessment task. They provide the framework by which a teacher can assign a score or grade to an assessment. Sometimes, it's useful to create a scoring guide which typically is just an adaptation of the rubric on which the teacher can insert numbers (based on the rubric) into appropriate places and eventually add them up for a score. It can be tricky when you translate a rubric to a score. You usually have to establish beforehand what range on the rubric will translate to what range of scores or grades. For example, a 4 on a rubric might translate to a range of 90-100%; a 3 to a range of 80-89%, and so on. Remember, you are the evaluator. Someone has to make the judgment even when using a rubric. Take the responsibility and be able to support your judgment with some objective criteria (i.e., the rubric).

Stages in Rubric Construction

1. Important decisions

- a. what the criteria will be
- b. how many rubrics will be used (one holistic one, separate one for each criterion)
- c. how fine a discrimination to make (how many different points on the scale there will be)
- d. what point on the scale will be the "cut score" (pass/fail)

2. Editing decisions based on reviewers, students, and use

- a. revising language of descriptors to make it more descriptive and less based on comparative or evaluative language (using bulleted specific indicators under each general paragraph description)
- b. including more points to make finer distinctions

3. Logic of design

- a. Decide which of the possible criteria are most important vs. feasibility
- b. Decide whether there will be one holistic rubric or various analytic-trait rubrics for each of the priority criteria
 1. Holistic quicker and easier to write and use
 2. Analytic give better feedback and more valid results
- c. Build a 4 to 6 point rubric regardless of how many points on a scale you want it to eventually use (highest numbers to highest performance)
- d. Avoid use evaluative words (i.e., "excellent"). Rather, use descriptive words (i.e., "uses correct grammar and follows formal usage rules")
- e. Build from the top describing exemplary performance (this is the target and anchor for scoring)
- f. Be sure to provide students samples of excellence to make clear what performances must be to be considered excellent with the chosen criteria
- g. An indicator is a concrete sign of a criterion being met. Example: An assessment of good speaking.

The criterion: "student speaks in an engaging manner"

Indicators of that criterion being met:

- makes eye contact
- modulates voice pleasantly
- uses stories and humor appropriate to audience and context
- handles audience questions gracefully

Two rubric designs:

Holistic

The paper will be evaluated using the following rubric:

- 90-100 Excellent** Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the aspects of the topic. Writes with a superior style incorporating a careful synthesis and analysis of information about the book. Clearly relates the topic to the educational context.
- 80-89 Good** Demonstrates a good understanding of the aspects of the topic. Writes with a proficient style incorporating a reasonable synthesis and analysis of information in the book. Relates the topic to the educational context.
- 70-79 Fair** Demonstrates an adequate understanding of the aspects of the topic. Writes with an acceptable style touching on relevant topics but lacks strong analysis of the book. Somewhat relates the topic to the educational context.
- 50-69 Unacceptable** Fails to demonstrate a basic understanding of the aspects of the topic. Writes with a substandard style failing to incorporate a synthesis or analysis of information in the book. Fails to relate the topic to the educational context.

Analytic

Criteria	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Below Basic
Identification of various learning style preferences/MI strengths-weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identifies different profiles according to all assigned and appropriate theorists/inventories • Provides a succinct description of each preference/style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies most of the different profiles according to assigned and appropriate theorists/inventories • Provides references to each preference/style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies some of the different profiles according to assigned and appropriate theorists/inventories • Provides a vague description of each preference/style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not able to adequately identify profiles according to assigned and appropriate theorists/inventories • Fails to provide any description of each preference/style
Implications of learning style preferences as a learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes in detail how he/she learns with respect to all of the style preferences • Includes any subjective impressions about preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes generally how he/she learns with respect to most of the style preferences • Includes some subjective impressions about preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes generally how he/she learns with respect to a few of the style preferences • Includes few subjective impressions about preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to describe how he/she learns with respect to the style preferences • Fails to include any subjective impressions about preferences

There are many examples of rubrics on-line.* Among them:

A Great Rubric Resource on the Web

<http://www.odyssey.on.ca/~elaine.coxon/rubrics.htm>

Another Great Rubric Resource on the Web

<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html>

A Rubric Template

http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/july/rubrics/Rubric_Template.html

Rubric Builder

http://www.landmark-project.com/classweb/tools/rubric_builder.php3

A Report Rubric

<http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/reportrub.html>

Some Holistic Algebra I Rubrics

<http://www.glade.net/%7Erletcher/RubricAlg1.htm#General>

Some Rubrics on Speaking and Writing

<http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/PALS/rubrics/index.htm>

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