



Assessing Student Learning – Rubrics

LeighAnn Tomaswick

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Introduction to Rubrics

Rubrics are tools that lay out expectations for an assignment with descriptions of criteria for determining various levels of performance. Rubrics can decrease subjectivity and time for grading, set standards for quality, articulate levels of accomplishment and provide feedback to students to help them improve and reach learning outcomes (Panadero, E., Jonsson, A., 2013). The two most common types of rubrics are holistic and analytical. Holistic rubrics typically describe all the criteria that fall within one performance level and assign a single score for the overall assignment. While some prefer the quicker nature of holistic rubrics, they usually do not provide specific points for improvement. Analytical rubrics provide students with clear information as to what each criteria would look like for each performance level (novice vs. expert or unacceptable vs. satisfactory). You can see the basic format of an analytical rubric below. Additional comments for each criteria or for the overall assignment provide students with extra guidance when moving forward such as suggested steps to take for the next draft, project or assignment.

Rubrics can be used throughout development of an assignment and at the end as an assessment tool. Students review the rubric at the start of an assignment to know what is expected of them for each evaluated criterion. The instructor can prompt students to self-evaluate prior to turning in their assignment to better prepare for the success the student desires. With grading criteria transparent, it also decreases frustrations with grades and contentions students have with grades assigned. Research also suggests that involving students in the rubric development can improve student performance (Andrade & Du, 2005; Hafner & Hafner, 2003; McCormic et al, 2007). After instructors assign weights to criteria and values with each performance level, they can be posted on Blackboard or provided in hardcopy form.

Performance Level

	Benchmark (<i>Novice</i>)	Milestone 1 (<i>Proficient</i>)	Milestone 2 (<i>Advanced</i>)	Milestone 3 (<i>Expert</i>)
Criteria 1 (<i>Clarity</i>)	<i>Details/explanations of criteria at this performance level</i>	<i>Details...</i>	<i>Details...</i>	...
Criteria 2 (<i>Organization</i>)	<i>Details...</i>
Criteria 3 (<i>Accuracy</i>)

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Implementation

- 1) Develop the criteria that will let you (and your students) know they have achieved the desired outcome of the assignment. - Check out our [Teaching Tool on the Backward Design](#) framework.
- 2) Determine how many performance standard categories you would like, 3-5 are recommended.

Label Examples for Rubrics Performance Standard Levels:

- a. Met, partially met, not met
 - b. Sophisticated, competent, partly competent, not yet competent
 - c. Exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable
 - d. Advanced, intermediate high, intermediate, developing
 - e. Distinguished, proficient, intermediate, novice
 - f. Accomplished, average, developing, beginning
- 3) Write the details for each criteria within each performance standard.
 - a. If you have 4 performance standards, you could think of what you hope students would do by the end of the course (advanced or highest performance standard), what they are able to do but have not perfected (proficient), what they are able to do but cannot do well (basic), and what they are unable to do (not satisfactory).
 - b. Sometimes you may find yourself putting too much into on criteria/performance standard and will need to consider breaking it into two criteria.
 - c. It may be helpful to review "[A Rubric for Rubrics](#)" before jumping in to see what you might want to consider when writing the details (i.e. distinction between levels, clarity of criteria, and guidance to learners...).
 - d. *Alternative:* Students develop the rubric after being provided with guidelines (and possibly key components). Student input provides them with a sense of ownership and intrinsic motivation.
 - 4) After you have developed the details for each criterion, you'll want to define how grades will be determined.
 - a. For example, a grader may circle the performance standard for each of the criteria the student achieved and write a score for each criteria on the side (Advanced would give students 4 points, proficient 3 and so forth).
 - b. Each criteria does not have to have the same weight. It depends on your goals for student learning and the importance of each of the evaluated criteria.
 - 5) Consider whether and how to provide more detailed comments; whether you will provide details for each of the criteria, overall comments for the assignment or no comments at all. Comments might specify what a student could do to improve or exactly where they made an errors in their assignment.
 - 6) Consider sharing the rubric prior to finalizing it, whether that is with a disciplinary colleague, or with colleagues at the Center for Teaching & Learning or Kent State Online. Ask them to review it and provide feedback on clarity and alignment with your learning outcomes. You could also share the rubric with students and prompt students to review it and ask questions to ensure everyone is on the same page. Defined terms may need to be added to ensure same understanding.

It is much better for rubrics to be edited prior to grading and assignment rather than in the middle of grading, forcing you to regrade assignments.



Frequently Asked Questions

- a) *Where can I create rubrics?* You can create rubrics by using a table within Microsoft Word or directly in Blackboard. If you would like grading to be done directly in Blackboard, please first check with the rubric design limitations to ensure your time designing the rubric is well spent.
- b) *Should I revise an existing rubric or create one from scratch?* It can be useful to review other rubrics online to get an idea what you might want to put in your rubric. You can always modify it to work to suit your unique needs. Why invent something that someone has already done (or at least something similar is out there)? Check out the AACU VALUE rubrics referenced in the resources section to see if there is one you can modify to fit your needs. You could also check with colleagues or the Center for Teaching and Learning to see if they have templates. Use the rubric for rubrics referenced in the resources section to help ensure your rubric is ready for use.
- c) *Why should I give the rubric to students before the assignment is due/the activity begins?* If students know what is expected of them before their work is graded, they can work towards the expectation they desire. This also helps students prepare in a direction that is more productive. Grading assignments that more closely align with your intended outcomes are much more efficient and enjoyable to grade.
- d) *Can students use rubrics to grade each others' work?* Assuming expectations were discussed and clear to students, and have repercussions related to dishonest and inaccurate grading, you should be fine. It would still be a great idea to go through a few activities to ensure accuracy and consistency of grading. If anything is found, talk about it. You also do not have to have students grading each other's final draft. Students can evaluate each other's work for low stakes assignments while you might grade the final assignment.

Other Resources

- Holistic rubrics: This type of rubric describes performance on several criteria under each performance standard. It does not allow you or students to pinpoint everything within the performance standard they achieved (most likely students will achieve various criteria across several performance standards; allowing for more subjectivity & more student questions upon grading).
 - DePaul's Teaching Commons description of analytical, developmental and holistic rubrics. <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/feedback-grading/rubrics/Pages/types-of-rubrics.aspx>
- Rubrics for Rubrics
 - A quick rubric for rubrics as developed by the Buck Institute for Education (BIE). https://www.bie.org/object/document/rubric_for_rubrics
 - This rubric provides more in-criteria and explanations for using this rubric for rubrics. https://www.mbaea.org/documents/filelibrary/pdf/csin/RubricforRubrics_77EAE6205D215.pdf



- Rubric Examples
 - VALUE rubrics, a set of 16 rubrics developed by Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) – used by more than 42,000 individuals across more than 4,200 institutions <https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>
 - Kathy Schrock’s Guide to Everything – Assessment and Rubrics Examples List (<http://www.schrockguide.net/assessment-and-rubrics.html>)
 - Cornell’s science rubrics (research paper, lab report, reflective essay, oral presentation) (<https://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/Science%20Rubrics.pdf>)
 - Wisconsin Polytechnic University Rubric Examples: Social media, group work, webpage, concept map, video/multimedia, simulations, research, writing, math, science, presentations & tools (<https://wwwcs.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/rubrics.cfm>)
 - University of Delaware’s variety of examples (Spanish, nutrition, writing, athletics, quant reasoning) (<http://ctal.udel.edu/assessment/resources/rubrics/>)
 - Carleton (Geoscience): <https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/assessment/instrubrics.html>
- Online Rubric Makers
 - http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/
 - <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>

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