

Creating and Using Rubrics for Student Assignments

Rubrics help illustrate course and assignment expectations and can save faculty valuable time during the student assessment process. Rubrics also help educators and students define “quality” for a particular class. Additionally, rubrics assist students in understanding how their work will be evaluated and help them judge and revise their own work before handing in their assignments.

What Is a Rubric?

A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work or “what counts.” For example, a rubric for a paper or research project lists the items that students must include in order to receive a certain score or rating. Generally rubrics specify the level of performance expected for several levels of quality. These levels of quality may be written as different ratings (excellent, good, needs improvement) or as numerical scores (4, 3, 2, 1) that are added up to form a total score and then associated with a grade (A, B, C).

Why Use Rubrics for Student Assignments?

As outlined by Andrade (2000), rubrics appeal to faculty and students for several reasons. First, they are powerful tools for both teaching and assessment. Rubrics monitor and improve student performance by making your expectations clear and by showing students how to meet course expectations. The result is often marked improvement in the quality of student work and learning.

Rubrics can also help students carefully judge the quality of their work and the work of their peers. When rubrics are used to guide self- and peer-assessment, students become increasingly able to spot and solve problems in their own and one another’s work.

Additionally, rubrics can reduce the amount of time you spend evaluating student work. You may find that by the time an assignment has been self- and peer-assessed in accordance with a rubric, you have little left to say about it. If you do have a comment about an assignment, you can simply circle an item in the rubric rather than struggle to explain the flaw or strength and figure out what to suggest in terms of improvement.

Finally, rubrics are easy to use and explain. Montgomery (2002) states that through the use of rubrics in her courses “students were able to articulate what they had learned” (p. 37).

Several challenges of using rubrics include the time it takes to create the rubric, lack of clarification for assessment items, and the potential for over-articulation of a task (Luft, 1999).

CRITERIA	LEVEL OF PERFORM		
	0	1	2
Participation			
Quality of Feedback			
Critical Thinking			



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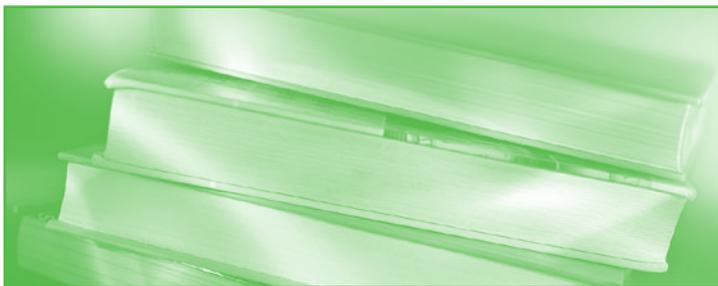
Give Me an Example

The following is an example of a rubric that can be used to assess student participation for an online discussion forum.

CRITERIA	LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE				
	0	1	2	3	4
Weekly Discussion Posting	Did not enter discussion	Poorly developed: does not add to the discussion	Developing ideas	Well developed	Well developed (at least one full paragraph) and introduces new ideas
Discussion responses to instructor and other students	Did not enter discussion	Interacts once with either the instructor or other students	Interacts at least twice with instructor and/or other students	Interacts at least 3 times with instructor and/or other students	Interacts multiple times with instructor and/or other students
Evidence of critical thinking (application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation)	Did not enter discussion	Poorly developed critical thinking	Beginnings of critical thinking	Some critical thinking evident	Clear evidence of critical thinking (application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation)

Tips on Using Rubrics

- Provide models for students. Show examples of previous student assignments (with names removed) to demonstrate different quality levels of work.
- List and explain the criteria within the rubric. Use the discussion of previous student work to begin a list of what counts in quality work.
- Articulate gradations of quality. Describe the lowest and highest levels of quality, then fill in the middle levels based on your knowledge of common student problems.
- Allow students to practice on models. Have students use the rubrics to assess examples of previous student work.



Other Considerations

Avoid unclear language in your rubric. Since a rubric is used to teach as well as to assess be sure that all the terms used are clearly defined. Also avoid unnecessary negative language. Use terms and phrases that will help students identify the deficiencies in their work and ways they can improve for the next assignment.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

1. Using Rubrics to Promote Thinking and Learning

Andrade, H.G. (2000). *Educational Leadership*, 57(5), 13-18.

2. RubiStar: Online Tool for Creating Rubrics

From High Plains Regional Technology in Education.

<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>

3. Rubrics: Design and Use in Science Teacher Education

Luft, J.A. (1999). *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 10(2), 107-121.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed99/Martin.htm>

4. Authentic Tasks and Rubrics: Going Beyond Traditional Assessments in College Teaching

Montgomery, K. (2002). *College Teaching*, 50(1), 34-39.

5. Rubrics for Web Lessons

Pickett, N. & Dodge, B. (2001).

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/rubrics/weblessons.htm>