



Rubrics

Main takeaway

Rubrics are a tool for communicating a coherent criteria and levels of performance on a given assignment. They're useful tools for both students and instructors because they indicate what students should learn or learn to do, how they will be evaluated, and how different levels of success are distinguished. Rubrics show students what constitutes excellent writing in a discipline or field, and they help faculty comment and grade efficiently. In all teaching contexts, rubrics clarify expectations and reduce uncertainty and confusion about writing assignments.

Designing rubrics

1. Choose a rubric type: Analytic or Holistic, Generic or Task-Specific
2. Identify the criteria for evaluation
3. Weight the criteria
4. Define performance levels for each criteria
5. Describe performance levels

1. Choose a rubric type

Analytic	Holistic										
Individually weighted criteria. Criteria for evaluating writing is in the left column, performance levels across the top	Instructor assigns expectations to different letter-grades and then matches student work to a single description on the scale										
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Organization</td> <td>35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thesis</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration of Sources</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Selection of Sources</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Style</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> </table>	Organization	35%	Thesis	30%	Integration of Sources	15%	Selection of Sources	10%	Style	10%	<p>A = exemplary organization, engaging thesis, credible selection and integration of sources, engaging style for intended audience</p> <p>B= clear organization, functional thesis, appropriate use of sources, uneven style</p>
Organization	35%										
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Style	10%										
Task-Specific	Generic										
<p>Create different rubrics for different assignments.</p> <p>Useful if each assignment is teaching a different skill.</p>	<p>Create one rubric for all assignments in a course.</p> <p>Useful if assignments are similar and expect the same performance or improved performance over time.</p> <p>Weighting of individual criterion might differ from one assignment to another</p> <p>Percentage of overall course grade might vary, with less for first assignment, more for last.</p>										

2. Identify the criteria for evaluation

- Consider the learning and writing outcomes for the assignment
- Consider the genre's form, expectations
- Brainstorm a list of knowledge and skills required to perform well
- Consider the required intellectual tasks and avoid combining different ones in the same criterion. For example, "choose credible sources and integrate them well" combines "choosing" and "integrating"

3. Weight the criteria (for analytic rubrics only)

- The different weight given to different criteria conveys their importance to students
- Rank the important writing features (such as thesis, use of evidence, organization) higher in the rubric and make worth more points (if you use points)
- Rank less important writing features lower in the rubric and make worth fewer points (such as correct grammar, no spelling errors, etc.)

4. Define performance levels for each criteria

- Focus on intellectual challenges
- Use qualitative terms, descriptive labels, with or without numbers
- Create clear contrast between levels, usually 3 to 5 levels
- Examples include: novice, competent, expert; absent or missing, satisfactory, outstanding; (1) unsatisfactory, (2) developing, (3) satisfactory, (4) exceptional

5. Describe performance levels

- Write short explanations for each performance level, for each criteria
- Be specific
- Use parallel language across a criterion, to help students understand the range of standards across the level

Example Generic Rubric	Outstanding	Adequate	Inadequate
Thesis	x		
Research		x	
Argument	x		
Clarity		x	
Well-edited for grammar, punctuation		x	

Use Rubrics to Efficiently Comment & Grade

When **commenting on drafts**, reference specific criteria in the rubric and levels of performance because

- It's an efficient use of instructor time
- It shows students that elements of effective writing are identifiable and achievable
- It highlights to students that revision is goal-oriented and actionable

Use rubrics to comment and grade efficiently

- Saves instructors time, because less need to give detailed final comments

When **grading final products**, use rubrics for consistency and focus

- Provides performance “anchors” for more consistent and fair grading
- Check appropriate cell; circle score; etc.
- Write comments in cells
- Limit comments on final graded products to brief note on strengths/revision ideas. Without the option for revision, or opportunity to do similar writing soon, students tend not to read or use final end comments.

Use technology to streamline commenting and grading

- Ask students to submit drafts in a Google Doc folder that's made “viewable” and “editable.”
- Use the “Suggestion” feature in Google Docs to give feedback on drafts and final products (this is like “track changes” in Word and is found in the upper right-hand corner).
- Meet with students in groups via WebEx, Zoom, phone, or FaceTime to share feedback verbally.
- Use your phone's memo/video recorder or laptop's audio/video software to give comments on drafts or final products. Share the files via Google Docs or Moodle.
- If using video, open the student's document on your screen and use screen-capture software like Camtasia to record your oral comments as you scroll through the paper. Share the video file via Google Docs, Moodle, or private YouTube channel. See the Resource section for further information on giving this kind of feedback.