

# A Guide to Creating Rubrics

## What is a rubric?

A rubric is a tool that teachers use to help them communicate expectations, provide focused feedback, and grade products, can be invaluable when the correct answer is not as cut and dried as Choice A on a multiple-choice test. But creating a great rubric is more than just listing expectations and assigning percentage points. A good rubric needs to be designed with thought and care in order to be most helpful to teachers and students.

## Steps to Creating a Rubric

### **Step 1: Define Your Goal**

Before you can create a rubric, you need to decide the type of rubric you'd like to use, and that will largely be determined by your goals for the assessment.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How detailed do I want my feedback to be?
- How will I break down my expectations for this project?
- Are all of the tasks equally important?
- How do I want to assess performance?
- What standards must the students hit in order to achieve acceptable or exceptional performance?
- Do I want to give one final grade on the project or a cluster of smaller grades based on several criteria?
- Am I grading based on the work or on participation? Am I grading on both?

### **Step 2: Determine Your Criteria**

This is where the learning objectives for your unit or course come into play. Here, you'll need to brainstorm a list of knowledge and skills you would like to assess for the project. Group them according to similarities and get rid of anything that is not absolutely critical. A rubric with too much criteria is difficult to use and can be overwhelming to the students. Try to stick with 4-7 specific criteria for which you'll be able to create unambiguous, measurable expectations in the performance levels. You'll want to be able to spot the criteria quickly while grading and be able to explain them quickly when instructing your students. In an analytic rubric, the criteria are typically listed along the left column.

### **Step 3: Create Your Performance Levels**

Once you have determined the broad levels you would like students to demonstrate mastery of, you will need to figure out what type of scores you will assign based on each level of mastery. Most ratings scales include between three and five levels. Some teachers use a combination of numbers and descriptive labels like "(4) Exceptional, (3) Satisfactory, etc." while

other teachers simply assign numbers, percentages, letter grades or any combination of the three for each level. You can arrange them from highest to lowest or lowest to highest as long as your levels are organized and easy to understand.

#### **Step 4: Write Descriptors for Each Level of Your Rubric**

This is probably your most difficult step in creating a rubric. Here, you will need to write short statements of your expectations underneath each performance level for every single criteria. The descriptions should be specific and measurable. The language should be parallel to help with student comprehension and the degree to which the standards are met should be explained.

Again, to use an analytic essay rubric as an example, if your criteria was "Organization" and you used the (4) Exceptional, (3) Satisfactory, (2) Developing, and (1) Unsatisfactory scale, you would need to write the specific content a student would need to produce to meet each level. It could look something like this:

#### **Examples of Rubric Criteria**

##### **For a Paper/Essay**

clarity, organization, grammar

context of & purpose for writing, content development

genre & disciplinary conventions

sources & evidence

control of syntax & mechanics

communication, critical thinking, content

thesis, structure, use of evidence, analysis, logic and argumentation, mechanics

##### **For a Presentation (individual)**

content, organization, graphics, English, elocution, eye contact

introduction, organization, context, evidence, analysis, presentation

organization, language, delivery, supporting material, central message

organization, subject knowledge, graphics, mechanics, eye contact, elocution

**For a Presentation (group)**

individual presentation skills, group presentation skills

group organization, individual organization, individual content

**For a Debate**

respect for other team, information, rebuttal, use of facts/statistics, organization,

understanding of topic, presentation style

**For Leading a Class Discussion**

preparation, content, discussion/debate methods, discussion questions,

communication skills

**For Problem Solving**

define problem, identify strategies, propose solutions/hypotheses, evaluate potential solutions, implement solution, evaluate outcomes

statement of problem, correctness of proof

understanding; strategies, reasoning, procedures; communication

analysis, interpretation, application

**For Lab Reports**

organization, content, analysis, interpretation

abstract/summary; introduction; experimental procedure; results (data, figures, graphs, tables, etc.); discussion; conclusions; spelling, grammar & sentence structure; appearance & formatting

introduction, research, purpose/problem, procedure, data & results, conclusion, grammar & spelling,

attractiveness, timeliness