Designing Rubrics

The key to successful assignments is a well-designed rubric that helps students get a clear understanding of what the teacher is looking for in their work. By providing rubrics to students alongside the assignment guidelines, teachers can give students an authentic way to self-assess their work. This also allows consistent and specific feedback on work, which promotes better learning for all. This brief focuses on designing effective rubrics

What Must a Rubric Contain?

- **Description** of assignment
- Criteria that will be assessed -- **performance criteria** (typically the rows of the rubric)
- **Performance levels** related to different levels of mastery of different components -- e.g. Needs improvement, Good, Excellent, etc. (typically the column headings of the rubric).
- **Performance level descriptors** identify observable characteristics of performance to achieve each level of mastery for each set of criteria (typically the cells in the intersection of the rows and columns).

Types of Rubrics

Holistic	• Gives students an overall single score for the entire assignment. • Useful for when one attribute is being assessed through assignment **Drawbacks:** • Quick scoring but minimal feedback *Sample here or here.*
Analytic	• Gives students scores for various criteria • Allows for detailed feedback on each criterion **Drawbacks:** • Takes more time to create. • Need to make it well-defined otherwise consistency may not exist.
Developmental	• Sub-type of analytic rubrics -- focus on the development of a particular skill/s (not the performance in a particular task). • Useful when the course is focused on skill development rather than final product -- where it is understood that the skill will never be mastered fully during the course (focus on development) **Drawbacks:** • Conceptually, this rubric is harder to make -- need to understand the theory of development.

For more information, including samples, see here and here.

Benefits of Rubrics

Benefits for instructors	Benefits for students
• Helps when grading -- saves time, reduces uncertainty, and increases consistency in grading	• Improves understanding of expectations of instructors • Gives specific feedback -- helps improve performance.

• Helps to identify strengths and weaknesses of students • Helps identify patterns in student learning -- can help in adjusting teaching techniques	○ Identifies strengths and weaknesses -- students can work on improvement.

Steps for Creating a Rubric

Making Rubrics with ChaptGPT- can get you started or you can start with some simple example rubrics. Stevens and Levi (2013) offer a number of sample rubrics. Additionally, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) offers a series of VALUE rubrics, available at no cost, that focus on different skills, such as critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, or information literacy. Or, you might also talk with colleagues in your department to see if they have rubrics you could adapt. However you start, it is important to adapt and customize rubrics to align with your specific course and assignments. You can refine the rubrics, as needed, by using the following guidelines

1. Clearly define the **purpose and goals** of the assignment.
    - Define the number of tasks involved in the assignment, the importance of different tasks/components, skills required to successfully complete tasks, etc.
    - Define what an exemplary assignment would be.
    - Decide on what kind of feedback the task requires -- detailed feedback, single grade, no grade, etc.
    - Depending on the goals, decide whether a holistic or analytic rubric works best.

2. Decide on the **type of rubric** best for the assignment you have defined (use the table above).

3. Define **assessment/performance criteria** (ideally 2+, meaningful, distinct, and clear)
    - Criteria should be based on:
        - The goals of the assignment
        - SLOs -- e.g. if one of the learning outcomes is the ability to compare and contrast two critical concepts, then the rubric should include this as one of the criteria (for analytic rubrics).
        - Skills and knowledge that need to be acquired to successfully complete the assignment.
    - Consider how you would define an A-grade assignment, B-grade, etc., and use the traits to design criteria.
    - Make a list of these. Group and label them. Eliminate unnecessary ones (maximum 7 is recommended).
    - Always consider how observable and measurable each criterion is.
    - Make sure there is no repetition/overlap

4. Define the **performance levels** (i.e. different levels of mastery/achievement) **along with their level descriptors** (i.e. how to achieve each level of mastery within each criterion):
    - Ideally, 3-5 performance levels should exist (levels can be numbers or descriptive levels).
    - Clear, concrete and specific levels of achievement and descriptors need to be outlined to reduce chances of subjectivity and ambiguity.
        - For example (for descriptors): '*writer makes a good argument*' is not as clear as '*writer's argument was clearly articulated and supported by research evidence'*.
        - Use parallel language (same tense, same structure for all descriptors)
    - Scoring wise:
        - When defining the scoring system and points allocated for different criteria, keep in mind the relative weightage of each criterion -- important/critical components may have a higher percentage/points than minor ones (e.g. formatting).

        - It is best to give a point range for each level and category, rather than discrete points. E.g. if a criterion allows a total of 20 points, each performance category can have ranges for different levels of achievement (e.g. 18-20 points, 15-17 points, etc.).

5. Get feedback. Test the rubric and revise/adjust if needed.

- Get feedback from students, TAs, colleagues, etc.
- Try a rubric on a sample student assignment to check applicability and effectiveness.

Other Tips and Best Practices for Designing High-quality Rubrics

- **Carefully consider the language used:** Use objective, constructive, and positive language (e.g. good, excellent, needs improvement, etc.) -- negative language focused on failure hinders improvement.
- **When choosing performance criteria, focus on what's important**: Choose what shows students what they have accomplished through the assignment -- when giving feedback, avoid focusing on what they failed to do. Also, avoid making the rubric a checklist of things to include.
    - You can consult TAs or co-teachers when designing criteria.
- **Focus on the processes and skills needed to successfully finish the assignment when defining the criteria:** The criteria for each level of mastery should relate to the level of effort required -- motivates maximum effort from students.
- **Design your rubric(s) alongside the assignment(s) they will be used for:** Designing your rubric in tandem with your assignment can help ensure alignment between the two. Alternatively, some people may find that designing the rubric ahead of the assignment can help them identify the key skills or objectives they want students to practice and demonstrate in a given assignment. Additionally, "planning your grading criteria at the outset (and communicating these criteria clearly to students) will enhance your ability to coach students" throughout a given assignment, and will help to make your feedback process "more efficient and helpful" (Bean, 2011, 267). Note: it takes time to create a rubric alongside an assignment. Nonetheless, the time saved when grading students' work outweighs the initial time required.
- Make sure the criteria for evaluation and definitions of each level of performance are **consistent with the level of the course.**
- **Provide rubrics before assignment submission**: allows student's self-assessment.
    - You can even ask students to self-review or get peer-reviewed, based on the rubric, before submission.
- Make sure to develop a **different rubric for every assignment.** Most rubrics can be reused after slight adjustments. AACU offers some samples (divided into skills),
- **Consider making an online rubric** **---** it automatically grades and makes your task easy.

Useful links:

- Once you have made a rubric, evaluate it using the best practices and the checklist offered and/or use this rubric to judge your rubric.
- For more information, refer to the links on this page.
- Samples:
    - Example of a well-designed rubric here (courtesy of Dr. Elizabeth).
    - Samples of the holistic rubric, analytical rubric, and checklist here.

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Creating High-Quality Rubrics

Best Practices for Designing Effective Rubrics
Rubrics. Useful Assessment Tools
Designing Rubrics
Types of Rubrics
Creating Rubrics - Dr. Elizabeth.pptx

For a general introduction to single-point rubrics, see https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/single-point-rubric/ . See Rubric Templates for a variety of templates

Below are some examples, courtesy of Dr. Elizabeth (2020)

i) Example of group interaction rubric

Score	Time management	Participation and performance in roles	Shared involvement
0	Group did not stay on task and so the task was not completed.	Group did not assign or share roles.	Single individual did the task.
1	Group was off-task the majority of the time but the task was completed.	Groups assigned roles but members did not use these roles.	Group totally disregarded comments and ideas from some members.
2	Group stayed on task most of the time.	Groups accepted and used some but not all roles.	Group accepted some ideas but did not give others adequate consideration
3	Group stayed on task throughout the activity and managed time well.	Group accepted and used roles and actively participated.	Groups gave equal consideration to all ideas
4	Group defined their own approach in a way that more effectively managed the activity.	Group defined and used roles not mentioned to them. Role changes took place that maximized individuals' expertise.	Groups made specific efforts to involve all group members including the reticent members.

Source: Adapted from Group Interaction (GI) SETUP (2003). Issues, Evidence and You. Ronkonkomo, NY Lab-Aids,

ii) Example of Critique Rubric

Area	Excellent (100%)	Very Good (90%)	Good (80%)	Okay (70%)
Synthesis	2- Integrated and synthesized to the point it is clear that the article and radio lab are actually covering the same topic	1.8- Attempts to integrate and synthesize the article and radio lab are clear	1.6- Some minimal integration of the article and radio lab	1.4- Reviews the article and radio lab completely and separately with no connections
Originality and Creativity	2- Very creative, original, and interesting; clear connections to concepts learned in memory lectures	1.8- creative, original and interesting ; good examples but connections not as clear	1.6- Some creativity but not very original: some examples; connections unclear	1.4- minimal creativity but content is mostly clear
Thoughtfulness, Accuracy and Conceptual Clarity	2- Accurate content; the material has been reviewed thoughtfully	1.8- Accurate content; the material has been reviewed maybe once	1.6- Some-what accurate content but sparse; very little elaboration	1.4- Not accurate, clearly did not read or listen to the material, missing details;

				no elaboration

Also see Making Assessments Simple
Advantages and Disadvantages of Rubrics