

What is a Rubric?

A rubric is

A rubric is a teaching and learning tool that explicitly describes the specific criteria you will use to evaluate a project or other aspect of a student's performance (e.g., completed artwork, online discussion, oral presentation, sketches, groupwork).

A rubric includes least one, preferably three, level(s) of achievement for each of your criteria.

Rubrics can look like this:

Criteria	Value Scale	Qualities
Clarity of writing	4 3 2 1	Clear, concise, and well-organized. Includes all necessary information. Spelling and grammar are correct.
Who finishes it on time	4 3 2 1	Meets all deadlines. Works independently. Shows initiative.
Accuracy	4 3 2 1	Provides accurate information. Shows attention to detail.
Collaboration	4 3 2 1	Works well with others. Contributes to the team. Shows respect for others' ideas.
Presentations	4 3 2 1	Delivers a clear and engaging presentation. Responds to questions effectively.

Or this:

	A (4-5)	B (3)	C (2)	D (1)	F (0)
Project Program	Integrates all elements of the design process into a cohesive program and a working model.	Integrates most concepts and understands most of the components of the working program. Design means right.	Some design requirements are met. Some elements of the working program. Design means right.	Some understanding of the program. Design means right.	Limited or incomplete understanding of the program. Design means right.
Concept Application	Excellent understanding of design concepts. Applies concepts to the design process. Shows initiative.	Most design concepts are understood. Applies concepts to the design process. Shows initiative.	Design concepts are understood. Applies concepts to the design process. Shows initiative.	Design concepts are understood. Applies concepts to the design process. Shows initiative.	Design concepts are understood. Applies concepts to the design process. Shows initiative.
Drawing	Highly detailed drawings. Shows initiative.	Shows a good level of detail. Shows initiative.	Shows a good level of detail. Shows initiative.	Shows a good level of detail. Shows initiative.	Shows a good level of detail. Shows initiative.
Design Principles	Can clearly explain design principles and how they apply to the design process. Shows initiative.	Can explain design principles and how they apply to the design process. Shows initiative.	Can explain design principles and how they apply to the design process. Shows initiative.	Can explain design principles and how they apply to the design process. Shows initiative.	Can explain design principles and how they apply to the design process. Shows initiative.
Participation	Actively participates in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative.	Actively participates in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative.	Actively participates in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative.	Actively participates in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative.	Actively participates in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative.

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Or this:

CRITERIA:	GRADE A
Model Quality	Excellent craftsmanship. High attention to detail. Model is well finished.
Expression/Understanding	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Sketch Quality	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Material Usage	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Manufacturing Processes	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Conceptual & Data Quality	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Visual Communication	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Problem-solving Ability	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Aesthetic Sense	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.
Research Ability	Excellent. Shows a clear understanding of design concepts and how they apply to the design process.



Effective rubrics

Contain no evaluative words (such as excellent, good, poorly, bad).

The point of a rubric is to define what makes a project (or other aspect of student performance) "good" by using descriptive details.

For example, instead of "Good composition," try "Composition leads the viewer's eye to the most important information first."

Are tailored to specific assignments or courses.

A rubric that is the same for two courses implies redundancy in course goals and content. Sequenced courses that develop the same skills may have rubrics that contain the same criteria, but progressively more advanced descriptors of achievement.

Make explicit what you value in the work.

While rubrics are never completely objective, they should make it easy for a person in your field to judge work in the same way that you do.

Are works in progress.

Teachers are constantly finding better ways to respond to student work. Therefore, rubrics should be thought of as works in progress. Teachers should expect to revisit and revise their rubrics regularly.

Why we use rubrics

Rubrics improve communication with students about assignments and grades.

"Student complaints about grading have been practically eliminated." A. Addison (FND)

"I get much less questioning and confusion about 'What am I supposed to do?' and 'Why and how are you judging this?' and 'How come I am getting a C?' I am just not getting those questions any more." P. Schifrin (FASCU)

"I have two students in my class that I failed previously—they wanted to take me again because they always know exactly what to expect." K. Frieders (IAD)

Rubrics push students to achieve more.

"I am getting more work in the 'A' range since I started using the rubric. Now students can actually see what an 'A' is." P. Schifrin (FASCU)

"Students ask more intelligent questions [with the rubric]." S. Murphy (FSH)

Rubrics communicate standards to people who provide extra help for students (ESL support teachers, workshop teachers, Writing Lab tutors, peers).

"If there is a rubric, it really helps me see what the teacher is looking for." Writing Lab tutor

Rubrics improve communication with colleagues.

"I had to take on three sections of a course I had never taught before at mid-semester for a teacher who left unexpectedly. Thank God there was a rubric!" AAU Instructor

Rubrics empower students.

"Students are able to use the language [from the rubric] to assess their work—there are discussion points. Otherwise, they don't know what to look for and they don't know how to arrange their work." M. Keelan (FASCU)

Rubrics focus teaching.

"The rubric helps me understand that there are all of these different components—more me standardizing my own criteria." L. Vusovic (IDS)

"They help me make sure I am meeting my objectives."
B. White (IAD)



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