

# 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. Easy to read and understand.
Who finishes it on time	4 3 2 1	Meets all deadlines. Shows initiative in completing the project.
Accuracy	4 3 2 1	Free of errors. Shows attention to detail.
Collaboration	4 3 2 1	Works well with others. Contributes to the team's success.
Presentations	4 3 2 1	Clear and engaging. Shows confidence and leadership.

## Or this:

	A (4.0)	B (3.0)	C (2.0)	D (1.0)	F (0.0)
<b>Project Program</b>	Integrates all elements of the design program and understands the underlying meaning of the program and the resulting design.	Integrates most concepts and understands most of the components of the resulting program. Design meets high potential for success.	Some design requirements are met. Good understanding of the underlying meaning of the resulting program. Design meets high potential for success.	Some understanding of the program. Design meets minimum requirements for success.	Lack of understanding of the program. Design does not meet minimum requirements for success.
<b>Concept Application</b>	Excellent understanding of design concepts. Applies concepts to the design program. Shows initiative in applying concepts to the design program.	Most design concepts are understood. Some good design ideas are shown. Research is used to support design decisions.	Design concepts are understood. Some good design ideas are shown. Research is used to support design decisions.	Design concepts are not fully understood. Design ideas are not fully supported by research.	Design concepts are not understood. Design ideas are not supported by research.
<b>Drawing</b>	High quality drawings. Clear and professional. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the drawing.	Most drawings are clear and professional. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the drawing.	Some drawings are clear and professional. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the drawing.	Drawings are not clear and professional. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the drawing.	Drawings are not clear and professional. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the drawing.
<b>Design Principles</b>	Excellent understanding of design principles. Applies principles to the design program. Shows initiative in applying principles to the design program.	Most design principles are understood. Some good design ideas are shown. Research is used to support design decisions.	Some design principles are understood. Some good design ideas are shown. Research is used to support design decisions.	Design principles are not fully understood. Design ideas are not fully supported by research.	Design principles are not understood. Design ideas are not supported by research.
<b>Participation</b>	Actively participates in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the design program.	Mostly participates in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the design program.	Some participation in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the design program.	Little participation in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the design program.	No participation in all aspects of the design process. Shows initiative in applying design concepts to the design program.

IAD 250 - Design of the Built Environment

## Or this:

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



## 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)



ACADEMY *of* ART UNIVERSITY

FOUNDED IN SAN FRANCISCO 1929 BY ARTISTS FOR ARTISTS

© 2009, Academy of Art University. Faculty Development: <http://faculty.academyart.edu>. 415.618.3855

**FACULTY  
DEVELOPMENT**