

# CREATING A RUBRIC

This job aid describes rubrics and their usefulness in assessing student performance that is difficult to assess in traditional ways.

This job aid will help you to:

- create a well-designed rubric
- ensure objectivity and fairness in the rubric



## What is a rubric?

Rubrics are descriptive scoring grids used for assessing and scoring student performance, as shown in the example below. The left column lists the different skills, tasks, or characteristics to be assessed, and the top row provides scores for the extent to which each performance is achieved. The “inside” of a rubric lists specific, descriptive criteria for each performance level of the skill, task, or characteristic.

*Rubric example 1: Written report assessment*

<b>COMM 0001 – Writing Reports</b>				
<b>Objective:</b> The student will write a report on his/her evaluation of a marketing strategy.				
<b>Criteria for success:</b> Each statement must be at a level of <i>Acceptable</i> or better.				
<b>Instructor:</b> _____		<b>Date:</b> _____		
<b>Student name:</b> _____		<b>Student ID:</b> _____		
Performance area	Poor 1	Acceptable 2	Excellent 3	Comments
<b>Spelling mistakes in the report</b>	3 or more	1 to 2	0	
<b>Grammar mistakes in the report</b>	4 or more	2 to 3	0 or 1	
<b>Punctuation mistakes in the report</b>	4 or more	2 to 3	0 or 1	
Instruction: Put a check mark in the appropriate box for each row.				
Excellent = Performance is above the expectations stated in the outcomes.				
Acceptable = Performance meets the expectations stated in the outcomes.				
Poor = Performance does not meet the expectations stated in the outcomes.				

## Why use a rubric?

Well-designed rubrics can:

- assess skills that are difficult to assess in “traditional” ways
- express what counts and what is valued in a rich descriptive form
- make the criteria for assessment transparent to learners
- clarify how quality is defined
- improve student performance by clarifying expectations, the assessment process, and how one can improve
- support learner self-reflection practices
- reduce the time you spend evaluating student performance
- promote high expectations
- increase reliability and validity in assessments
- provide more clarity and objectivity than other tools, such as rating scales

## Characteristics of rubrics

A well-designed rubric has the characteristics described below.

### Learning outcomes supported

Rubrics should support learning outcomes, and they should have criteria for success based on expected outcomes.

### Clearly defined performance to be assessed

The left column should have clearly-defined, detailed, agreed-upon skill, task, or characteristic statements that are organized in a logical or intuitive way. This gives more reliable results.

### Clearly defined scoring

Rubrics should include clear wording with numbers in the top row for scoring. As an example:

*1 = poor* through to *5 = excellent* is better than *1 = lowest* through to *5 = highest*, or simply *1 through 5*

The range of numbers in the top row for scoring should apply to all rows within a section (such as all ranging from 1 to 5). The range of numbers should always increase or always decrease. For example, if the last number is the highest in one section, the last number should be the highest in the other sections.

## Clear descriptive criteria for each performance level

Rubrics should have specific, clearly-distinguishable descriptive criteria for each “box” in the grid. Objective and measurable descriptions are best. For example, *Labour estimates are within 10% of the actual amount* is better than *Labour estimates are quite accurate*.

Each box should preferably have only one factor to assess. If you have two factors within a box, you cannot say that the performance level was achieved if one criterion was met but not the other. This will make scoring more subjective. So, to increase objectivity, if the skill is *creating a good first impression in an interview*, it is better to keep *eye contact* and *handshake characteristics* in separate rows.

## Short enough to be practical

Rubrics should highlight only the critical tasks or skills, which will help keep them short enough to be practical.

## Space for other information

Rubrics should include space for other information such as the student’s name, date, course, examiner, overall result and, optionally, comments.

## Improve over time

As you use the rubric and analyze your students’ performances, decide whether the rubric needs revising. Give it to other instructors, initially and after a revision, to review for clarity and completeness.

## Other considerations for rubrics

When assigning numbers to each column for marks, consider the following:

- What should the first number be? If 0, does the student deserve 0 percent? If 1, does the student deserve 20% (assuming 5 is the top mark), even if he/she has done nothing?
- What should the second number be? If 2 (assuming 5 is the top mark), does the person really deserve a failing mark (40%)? This would mean that the first two columns represent different degrees of failure.
- Consider variations in the value of each column. Assuming 5 is the top mark, the columns could be valued at 0, 2.5, 3, 4, and 5.
- Consider the weighting for each row. For example, for rating a student’s team skills, should *attendance* and *fair share of work* be proportionally rated the same? In many instances, some skills or components are much more important than others. A multiplier or weight can be put in another column for calculating a total mark in the last column.

Consider having students create the rubric. This can get them to think deeply about the content.

## More examples of rubrics

*Rubric example 2: 3-month probation assessment*

Performance area	Poor 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4
Reliability	0 or 1 of the following: - Consistently on time - Consistently on task - Follows all directions - Completes every task <input type="checkbox"/>	2 of the following: - Consistently on time - Consistently on task - Follows all directions - Completes every task <input type="checkbox"/>	3 of the following: - Consistently on time - Consistently on task - Follows all directions - Completes every task <input type="checkbox"/>	All of the following: - Consistently on time - Consistently on task - Follows all directions - Completes every task <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Excellent = Performance is exceptional – well above the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p> <p>Good = Performance is above the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p> <p>Acceptable = Performance meets the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p> <p>Poor = Performance does not meet the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p>				

A more objective alternative for this rubric would be to have each element in a separate row. You could then have criteria, such as *Late 3 or more times* under *Poor* through to *Never late* under *Excellent*, as shown below.

Performance area	Poor 1	Acceptable 2	Good 3	Excellent 4
Reliability				
Consistently on time	Late 3 or more times <input type="checkbox"/>	Late 2 times <input type="checkbox"/>	Late 1 time <input type="checkbox"/>	Never late <input type="checkbox"/>
Consistently on task	Off-task 3 or more times <input type="checkbox"/>	Off-task 2 times <input type="checkbox"/>	Off-task 1 time <input type="checkbox"/>	Always on task <input type="checkbox"/>
Follows all directions	Fails to follow directions 3 or more times <input type="checkbox"/>	Fails to follow directions 2 times <input type="checkbox"/>	Fails to follow directions 1 time <input type="checkbox"/>	Always follows directions <input type="checkbox"/>
Completes every task	Fails to complete 3 or more tasks <input type="checkbox"/>	Fails to complete 2 tasks <input type="checkbox"/>	Fails to complete 1 task <input type="checkbox"/>	Always completes every task <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Excellent = Performance is exceptional – well above the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p> <p>Good = Performance is above the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p> <p>Acceptable = Performance meets the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p> <p>Poor = Performance does not meet the expectations stated in the outcomes.</p>				

Rubric example 3: Customer service skills assessment

Performance factor		Needs improvement 1	Entry level 2	Strong performer 3	Superior performer 4
Investigative Skills	<b>Identifies customer needs</b>	Unable to identify needs or does not listen to customer <input type="checkbox"/>	Eventually identifies customer needs <input type="checkbox"/>	Recognizes customer needs <input type="checkbox"/>	Easily and quickly recognizes customer needs <input type="checkbox"/>
Problem Solving	<b>Solves problems</b>	Does not solve problems accurately <input type="checkbox"/>	Solves problems eventually given enough time and/or assistance <input type="checkbox"/>	Solves problems within reasonable amount of time <input type="checkbox"/>	Solves problems quickly—takes ownership of problems <input type="checkbox"/>
Technical/Product Knowledge	<b>Identifies relevant policies and procedures</b>	Has difficulty identifying and locating relevant policies and procedures <input type="checkbox"/>	Identifies relevant policies and procedures with time and/or assistance <input type="checkbox"/>	Identifies relevant policies and procedures within reasonable time <input type="checkbox"/>	Quickly identifies relevant policies and procedures <input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Explains policies</b>	Does not explain policies and procedures accurately <input type="checkbox"/>	Reads policy—no interpretation or clarification <input type="checkbox"/>	Describes at appropriate level <input type="checkbox"/>	Interprets and clarifies at appropriate level <input type="checkbox"/>
Oral Communication	<b>Uses appropriate tone of voice</b>	Sounds bored, cold—may match angry tone of customer <input type="checkbox"/>	Uses neutral or indifferent tone <input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently uses warm, pleasant tone <input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently uses warm, pleasant tone <input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Uses appropriate word choice</b>	Uses inappropriate telephone etiquette or uses negative word choices <input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally uses appropriate etiquette and positive word choices <input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently uses appropriate etiquette and positive word choices <input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently uses appropriate etiquette and positive word choices <input type="checkbox"/>
Customer Service Orientation	<b>Empathizes with customer</b>	Says nothing or ignores customer's feelings <input type="checkbox"/>	Simply restates customer's words—moves to action too quickly <input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently uses empathetic responses accurately <input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently uses a variety of empathetic responses accurately <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Subtotal</b>					
				<b>Total Score (out of 28)</b>	

Rubric example 4: Applied skills assessment

	<b>Poor 0</b> Minimum Guidance Required	<b>Inadequate 2</b>	<b>Needs Improvement 3</b>	<b>Meets Industry Standard 4</b>	<b>Exceeds Industry Standard 5</b> Minimum Guidance Required	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Service Information</b>	Correct documentation not located		Incomplete documentation located		Correct documentation located	1	
<b>Verify Concerns</b>	Not attempted or completely missed		Incorrect confirmation of concern or repair		Complete confirmation of concern or repair	3	
<b>Identify Components</b>	Unable to identify any components		More than one component identified incorrectly	One component identified incorrectly	All components identified correctly	1	
<b>Describe Operation</b>	Unable to describe any part of the operation		Partial description of component operation		Complete description of component operation	1	
<b>Inspect</b>	Unable to identify any faults		One or more faults not identified correctly		All faults correctly identified	1	
<b>Measure</b>	Unable to measure		Unable to measure correctly		Measured correctly	1	
<b>Adjust</b>	Unable to adjust		Adjusted incorrectly		Adjusted correctly	1	
<b>Repair</b>	Does not operate or function	Operates with major malfunction(s)	Operates or functions with minor malfunction(s)		Operates and functions correctly	3	
<b>Procedure(s)</b>	Unable to demonstrate any part of the procedure(s)	Demonstrates procedure(s) with more than one incorrect technique		Demonstrates procedure(s) with one incorrect technique	Demonstrates the correct procedure(s)	3	
						<b>Total Score:</b>	<u>75</u>

## Checklist for creating a rubric

Follow the steps in the checklist below to create your rubric.

*To create a rubric:*

- 1. Review the learning outcome and associated criteria for success that this rubric will support.
- 2. Determine the numeric scale and its terminology for the top row (e.g., 1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*).
- 3. List each skill and subskill in the first column. Arrange the items in a logical order, if you can.
- 4. Write a clear description for the level of success or quality needed to demonstrate proficient performance or level of understanding for each skill/subskill. This is the *excellent* column.
- 5. Write a description for the level of success or quality needed to demonstrate the worst performance or level of understanding for each skill/subskill. This is the *poor* column.
- 6. For each skill/subskill, fill in the level of success or quality needed to demonstrate each level of intermediate performance or level of understanding.
- 7. Add weight and final score columns, if needed.
- 8. Format the rubric.
- 9. Write clear instructions for the observer.
- 10. Ask for feedback from other instructors.

## References

Brookhart, S. M. (1999). The Art and Science of Classroom Assessment: The Missing Part of Pedagogy. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report 27* (1).

Pomperaug Regional School District, Connecticut (1996). *Teachers guide to performance-based learning and assessment*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Moskal, B. M. (2000). Scoring Rubrics: What, When and How? *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(3).