

## Rubrics for Rapid Assessment

Rubrics can be excellent tools to use when assessing students' work. They can make marking faster and more straightforward for yourself and your students.

You should use rubrics if:

- You find yourself re-writing the same comments on several different students' assignments.
- Your marking load is high and writing out comments takes up a lot of your time.
- Students repeatedly question you about the assignment requirements, even after you've handed back the marked assignment.
- You want to address the specific components of your marking scheme prior to and following the assignment submission.
- You find yourself wondering if you are grading or commenting fairly at the beginning, middle, and end of a grading session.

### What is a rubric?

A rubric is an assessment tool that clearly indicates achievement criteria across all the components of any kind of student work, from written to oral to visual. It can be used for marking assignments, class participation, or overall grades. There are two types of rubrics: holistic and analytical.

### Holistic rubrics

Holistic rubrics put together several different assessment criteria and classify them together under grade headings or achievement levels.

For a sample participation rubric, see the [Appendix](#) of this aide. The University of Waterloo's [Responding to Writing Assignments](#) teaching tip includes holistic rubrics specifically designed for writing assignments. See also Facione and Facione's (1994) "[Holistic Critical Thinking Rubric \[PDF\]](#)" which is useful in many disciplines.

### Analytic rubrics

Analytic rubrics separate different assessment criteria and address them comprehensively. In these rubrics, the top axis includes values that can be expressed either numerically or by letter grade, or a scale from Exceptional to Poor. The side axis includes the assessment criteria for each component. Analytic rubrics can also permit different weightings for different components.

See the [Teamwork VALUE Rubric \[PDF\]](#), one of the many [rubrics developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities](#), or (AAC&U).

## **How to make a rubric**

If none of the rubrics available suit your needs, you can make your own. Here's how:

1. Decide what criteria or essential elements must be present in the student's work to ensure that it is high in quality.
2. Decide how many levels of achievement you will include on the rubric and how they will relate to your institution's definition of grades as well as your own grading scheme.
3. For each criterion, describe in detail what the performance at each achievement level looks like.
4. Leave space for additional, tailored comments or overall impressions and a final grade.

## **How to use rubrics effectively**

Be transparent:

Give students a copy of the rubric when you assign the performance task if possible. Hand the rubric back with the assignment.

Integrate rubrics into assignments:

Require students to attach the rubric to the assignment when they hand it in. Some instructors ask students to self-assess or give peer feedback using the rubric prior to handing in the work.

Leverage rubrics to manage your time:

When you mark the assignment, circle or highlight the achieved level of performance for each criterion on the rubric. This is where you will save a great deal of time, as no comments are required.

Include any additional specific or overall comments that do not fit within the rubric's criteria.

## Appendix

### Sample Participation Rubric

#### A

- Always prepared and attends nearly every class
  - Participates constructively in class, models leadership for others and on teams
  - Exhibits preparedness and punctuality in class/class work
  - Demonstrates initiative and improvement without prompting
  - Seeks to understand and acknowledge others' thoughts
  - Often reaches full potential by challenging self
  - Exceptional content knowledge readily integrated into new problems or settings
  - Challenges his/her own thoughts and ideas
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#### B

- Usually prepared and attends most classes
  - Participates constructively in class, works well with others, and is a team player
  - Excellent content knowledge
  - Completes all class assignments; occasionally adds something extra
  - Demonstrates initiative and improvement with some prompting
  - Seeks to understand and acknowledge others' thoughts
  - Stretches to reach full potential when prompted
  - Open to challenges to thoughts and ideas from others
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#### C

- Sometimes prepared and attends many classes
  - Average content knowledge
  - Occasionally or only challenges thought when encouraged by others
  - Assignments reflect average work
  - Sometimes an active participant in class; works fairly well with others
  - Occasionally accepts and attends to challenges and feedback
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#### D

- Rarely prepared and attends some classes
  - Rarely participates constructively in class
  - Assignments are late, incomplete, or not turned in at all
  - Low level of content knowledge
  - Inactive participant; works reluctantly with others
  - Sometimes shows a close-minded disposition with regard to feedback and challenge
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#### F

- Clearly unprepared and nearly always absent

- No participation or harmful participation
- No assignments turned in
- No assignments available to assess content knowledge
- Not present enough to judge participation and interaction, or undermining others
- Close-minded disposition with regard to feedback, challenge, and course content

*Adapted from “Rubrics: Useful Assessment Tools” by the University of Waterloo Centre for Teaching Excellence:*

<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/assessing-student-work/grading-and-feedback/rubrics-useful-assessment-tools>