Rubrics

Main Takeaway

Rubrics serve as a tool used to communicate clear criteria and performance standards for a given assignment. They benefit both students and instructors by outlining learning objectives, explaining how work will be assessed, and distinguishing between varying levels of achievement. For students, rubrics illustrate what constitutes strong writing withing a particular discipline or field. For faculty, they offer a framework to provide feedback and assign grades. In all teaching contexts, rubrics clarify expectations and reduce uncertainty and confusion about writing assignments.

Designing Rubrics

Step 1- Choose a rubric type
Step 2- Identify the criteria for evaluation
Step 3- Weigh the criteria
Step 4- Define performance levels for each criteria
Step 5- Describe performance levels

Analytic	Holistic	Task-Specific	Generic
Individually weighted	Expectations for letter grades	Different rubrics for assignments	One rubric for all assignmetns
Evaluating writing	Matching student work to description	Each assignment teaches different skills	Assignments are similar
Might differ from assignment	Percentage of course grade varies	N/A	Percentage of course grade varies

Identify the Criteria for Evaluation:
- Align criteria with the assignment's learning and writing objectives.
- Consider the genre's conventions and audience expectations.
- Brainstorm the knowledge and skills students need to succeed.
- Focus on distinct intellectual tasks for each criterion—avoid combining multiple tasks.
  Example: Don't combine "selecting credible sources" with "integrating sources effectively," as each involves a different skill.

Weight the Criteria *(for analytic rubrics only):*
- Use different weights to signal the relative importance of each criterion to students.
- Assign more points to higher-order writing features (e.g., thesis clarity, use of evidence, organization).
- Assign fewer points to lower-order concerns (e.g., grammar, spelling).

Define Performance Levels:
- Emphasize the intellectual challenges represented at each level.
- Use descriptive, qualitative labels—with or without numeric scores.
- Ensure a clear and consistent progression across levels (typically 3 to 5).
  Examples:
    - Novice → Competent → Expert
    - Absent → Satisfactory → Outstanding
    - (1) Unsatisfactory → (2) Developing → (3) Satisfactory → (4) Exceptional

Describe Performance Levels:
- Provide a brief, specific description for each performance level within each criterion.
- Use parallel structure across levels to help students compare expectations easily.
- Aim for clarity and precision to guide both student learning and instructor assessment.

Using Rubrics to Comment & Grade

When Commenting on Drafts:	When Grading Final Products:
Reference specific criteria in the rubric and levels of performance because: • Saves instructor time • Less need to give detailed final comments • Demonstrates effective writing to students • Reinforces that revision is goal-oriented and achievable	When grading final products, use rubrics for consistency and focus: • Supports fair and consistent grading through performance "anchors" • Check appropriate cell; circle score; etc. • Write comments in cells • Limit end comments to short notes on strengths or revision ideas Final feedback is often overlooked if revision isn't required, so brief comments are more effective.