

RUBRICS

A rubric is a scoring tool that conveys to the student the instructor's expectations for an assignment, paper, or performance. It divides the assignment into different components that are expected to be addressed in the assignment. In some rubrics, descriptions of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable levels of performance are included for each of the components.

The benefit of using a rubric is that it takes the mystery out of grading for both you and your students. It makes evaluating students' work consistent, objective, and efficient, and it helps you focus on key concepts and standards that you expect students to achieve. In addition, rubrics provide students with a clear understanding of what is expected of them and what they need to include in an assignment. Rubrics are most helpful when they are shared with students before the assignment is due.

Good rubrics include four basic components:

- 1) A description of the task or assignment, which can be taken directly from the course syllabus;
- 2) A scale to indicate levels of performance. Scales can vary from yes/no; to excellent, competent, needs work; to exemplary, acceptable, unacceptable.
- 3) The dimensions of a rubric break the assignment into components that will be included in the grading. For example, dimensions of a writing assignment may include grammar, usage of citations, thesis statement, development of the argument, etc.
- 4) A description for each levels of performance within the dimension.

Rubrics that provide descriptions for each level of performance help students differentiate what is, for example, an "acceptable" product as opposed to an "exemplary" one, or at least understand why they did not get an A grade on the assignment. Moreover, with a better understanding of what is considered "exemplary" students may be motivated to produce higher quality work. Once the assignment is graded, the rubric provides students with tangible feedback that helps them identify their strengths and areas that need improvement, and it helps them monitor their own progress.

The good news about rubrics is that you do not need to create a rubric from scratch. Many professional associations and colleges and universities post their rubrics on their website. The links to some of these can be found in the Resource section. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) have developed 16 [VALUE](#) (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics that cover many of the learning outcomes that college students are expected to achieve. These rubrics were developed by teams of faculty and other professionals across the country in 2009. Since that time they have been used widely in 4,200 unique institutions. These rubrics serve as the gold standard for rubrics, and they can be modified and adapted to fit your needs.