

Eberly Center

Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation

Creating and Using Rubrics

A rubric is a scoring tool that explicitly describes the instructor's performance expectations for an assignment or piece of work. A rubric identifies:

- criteria: the aspects of performance (e.g., argument, evidence, clarity) that will be assessed
- descriptors: the characteristics associated with each dimension (e.g., argument is demonstrable and original, evidence is diverse and compelling)
- performance levels: a rating scale that identifies students' level of mastery within each criterion

Rubrics can be used to provide feedback to students on diverse types of assignments, from papers, projects, and oral presentations to artistic performances and group projects.

Benefitting from Rubrics

A carefully designed rubric can offer a number of benefits to instructors. Rubrics help instructors to:

- reduce the time spent grading by allowing instructors to refer to a substantive description without writing long comments
- help instructors more clearly identify strengths and weaknesses across an entire class and adjust their instruction appropriately
- help to ensure consistency across time and across graders
- reduce the uncertainty which can accompany grading
- discourage complaints about grades

An effective rubric can also offer several important benefits to students. Rubrics help students to:

- understand instructors' expectations and standards
- use instructor feedback to improve their performance
- monitor and assess their progress as they work towards clearly indicated goals
- recognize their strengths and weaknesses and direct their efforts accordingly

Examples of Rubrics

Here we are providing a sample set of rubrics designed by faculty at Carnegie Mellon and other institutions. Although your particular field of study or type of assessment may not be represented, viewing a rubric that is designed for a similar assessment may give you ideas for the kinds of criteria, descriptions, and performance levels you use on your own rubric.

Paper

- [Example 1: Philosophy Paper](#) This rubric was designed for student papers in a range of courses in philosophy (Carnegie Mellon).
- [Example 2: Psychology Assignment](#) Short, concept application homework assignment in cognitive psychology (Carnegie Mellon).
- [Example 3: Anthropology Writing Assignments](#) This rubric was designed for a series of short writing assignments in anthropology (Carnegie Mellon).
- [Example 4: History Research Paper](#). This rubric was designed for essays and research papers in history (Carnegie Mellon).

Projects

- [Example 1: Capstone Project in Design](#) This rubric describes the components and standards of performance from the research phase to the final presentation for a senior capstone project in design (Carnegie Mellon).
- [Example 2: Engineering Design Project](#) This rubric describes performance standards for three aspects of a team project: research and design, communication, and team work.

Oral Presentations

- [Example 1: Oral Exam](#) This rubric describes a set of components and standards for assessing performance on an oral exam in an upper-division course in history (Carnegie Mellon).
- [Example 2: Oral Communication](#) This rubric is adapted from Huba and Freed, 2000.
- [Example 3: Group Presentations](#) This rubric describes a set of components and standards for assessing group presentations in history (Carnegie Mellon).

Class Participation/Contributions

- [Example 1: Discussion Class](#) This rubric assesses the quality of student contributions to class discussions. This is appropriate for an undergraduate-level course (Carnegie Mellon).
- [Example 2: Advanced Seminar](#) This rubric is designed for assessing discussion performance in an advanced undergraduate or graduate seminar.

See also "[Examples and Tools](#)" section of this site for more rubrics.

[CONTACT US](#) to talk with an Eberly colleague in person!