

How to design rubrics

Rubrics take many different forms. Some rubrics describe only three levels of performance; others have more. Sometimes the terminology used to describe the various parts of the rubric will differ. None of this really matters. The important thing is that the purpose of the rubric remains the same: it is used to make levels of performance explicit for both teacher and student.

The first step in designing a rubric is to identify the skills, knowledge and understanding that the teacher wishes the students to demonstrate. These become the success criteria.

For example:

An ability to ...

Knowledge of ...

Understanding of how/why/the ways in which ...

The next step is to decide how many levels are to be described and then to write the performance descriptors for each of those criteria.

Some people find it easiest to start with the medium level, which should represent a satisfactory level of performance, and proceed from there to write the higher and lower level descriptors.

Writing performance descriptors

The performance descriptors describe the relative differences between performances at each level. These are some of the ways that difference can be presented:

- by referring to *specific aspects* of the performance which will be different at different levels.
For example,
analyses the effect of ... /describes the effects of ... /lists the effects of ...
- by using *adjectives, adjectival phrases, adverbs and adverbial phrases*. These extra words are used where the aspects of a performance stay the same across the levels, but there is a qualitative difference to the performance.
For example
- accurately explains/explains with some accuracy/explains with limited accuracy
- provides a complex explanation/provides a detailed explanation/provides a limited explanation
- shows a comprehensive knowledge/shows a sound knowledge/shows a basic knowledge

*These descriptions need to be supported by work samples or exemplars in order to make the differences clear to students.

- by using numeric references. Numbers identify quantitative differences between levels.
For example,
- provides three examples/provides two examples/provides an example
*- uses several strategies/uses some strategies/uses few or no strategies**
A word of warning: numeric references on their own can be misleading. They are best teamed with a qualitative reference (eg three appropriate and relevant examples) to avoid ignoring quality at the expense of quantity.

* This kind of description needs to be supported by work samples or exemplars in order to demonstrate exactly what is meant by 'several' etc.

- by referring to the degree of assistance needed by the student to complete the task. This kind of performance descriptor is explicit about the degree of independence shown by the student while undertaking the task.

For example,

- correctly and independently uses/ with occasional peer or teacher assistance, uses/ with teacher guidance, attempts to use

The consistent use of terminology when describing the parts of a rubric will assist in developing with students a metalanguage that can later be referred to when providing feedback. When teachers are uncertain of the terminology, or refer to parts of the rubric differently each time, clarity is lost and students are confused. A cross-school agreement about the use of terminology provides further consistency.

Taken from:

http://www.assessmentforlearning.edu.au/professional_learning/success_criteria_and_rubrics/success_design_rubrics.html