

# Selecting different rubric types

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This resource describes different kinds of rubrics and considerations for selecting the rubric that is best aligned with an instructor’s grading practice, assignments, and learning objectives.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

Review the considerations below when designing or revising your own rubrics. [CET](https://cet.usc.edu/contact-us/) is available to discuss rubric options and assist in selecting the best fit for your individual assessments. Uploading rubric information into your learning management system is supported by ITS or your local instructional design team.

### What is a rubric?

A rubric is an evaluation tool designed to provide clear and objective criteria for assessing and grading student work. Rubrics contain a set of predetermined performance standards, typically organized in a grid or chart format. These standards help instructors communicate expectations for assignments and evaluate student work in a clear, consistent, transparent way. Rubrics can empower students to set well defined learning goals, and they can promote a more objective and fair grading process.

### Types of rubrics and considerations for selection

#### Analytic Rubrics

Analytic Rubrics feature a grid of “criteria” (columns) and “levels” of achievement (header row). The instructor assigns points or weights to criteria, and then evaluates student performance in each area. This rubric type is most often used for complex assignments where each of the identified criteria is scored individually.

* Provides specific feedback on areas of strength and weakness.
* Criterion can be weighted to reflect the relative importance of each dimension.
* Unless each point for each criterion is well-defined, multiple graders may not arrive at the same score. In this case, a norming session before grading an assignment is suggested.

Table Example format of an analytic rubric

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Level of achievement (e.g. Excellent) | Level of achievement (e.g. Satisfactory) | Level of achievement (e.g. Needs improvement) |
| Criteria 1 | Description of the criteria for this specific level of achievement | Description of the criteria for this specific level of achievement | Description of the criteria for this specific level of achievement |
| Criteria 2 | Description of the criteria for this specific level of achievement | Description of the criteria for this specific level of achievement | Description of the criteria for this specific level of achievement |

#### Single-point Rubric

A single-point rubric is a lot like an analytic rubric, because it breaks down the components of an assignment into different criteria. What makes it different is that it only describes the criteria for proficiency. It typically includes sections for detailed feedback about students’ strengths and areas for improvement. This rubric type is most often used when instructors want flexibility in assessing performance and wish to provide detailed feedback without having to rigid define distinct levels of achievement.

* Allows for more flexibility in assessing student work since it does not prescribe specific performance levels or scores.
* Can be less prone to bias because they focus on specific criteria rather than predetermined levels of achievement.
* Provides detailed feedback by highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.
* Some students may find single-point rubrics less informative than traditional rubrics with defined performance levels, potentially leaving them uncertain about performance expectations and whether their work met expectations.

Table Example format of a single-point rubric

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Areas for improvement | Criteria | Evidence of exceeding standards |
|  | Criteria 1 |  |
|  | Criteria 2 |  |

#### Holistic Rubrics

Holistic Rubrics describe characteristics of each level of performance for an assignment or activity overall (e.g. characteristics of an excellent research paper). With a holistic rubric the grader assigns a single score (usually on a 1 to 6 point scale) based on an overall evaluation of the student work. This rubric type is most often used for assignments where there is not one single correct response and the focus is on overall quality and proficiency.

* Can be applied more consistently by graders increasing reliability.
* Can save time grading by minimizing the number of evaluation criteria.
* Does not provide targeted student feedback on individual criteria.
* Individual criteria cannot be weighted.
* Can be more difficult to select the single best description and does not provide the opportunity for more nuanced grading.

Table Example format of a holistic rubric

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Score | Description of criteria met |
| 4 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 1 |  |