

# Learning More About Rubrics

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## What are Rubrics?

Rubrics are a scoring scale consisting of a set of criteria that describe what expectations are being assessed/evaluated and descriptions of levels of quality used to evaluate students work or to guide students to desired performance levels. Rubrics should:

- be teacher or student and teacher created
- be given prior to the task
- be used often during teaching as an assessment tool
- be a combination of quality and quantity of student learning
- be fair to all students
- indicate both what students learn and how well they learn
- have clear indications of how students can improve
- allow students the ability to assess their own work
- be specific to the task they are being used to assess/evaluate

## Assessment and Evaluation

Often you will see these terms used interchangeably. There should be a clear distinction made between the two.

**Assessment:** - is the ability to compare work with a set of criteria to see where you stand on the scale. You have an opportunity to improve and reassess your position at frequent intervals. You may think of assessment as the practice session where students improve and solidify their learning. Teacher feedback is essential during this process.

**Evaluation:** - is a judgment at a particular point in time. It is often an accumulation of information that gives a specific appraisal based on a set of criteria. An evaluation of student work should reflect their most consistent and recent efforts.

Rubrics may be used as both an assessment and evaluation tool. As an assessment instrument, it allows students to assess their own achievement as they are working on a task. It is also an opportunity for the teacher, while conferencing with a student, to point out the differences in levels and to give students specific indicators of what they must do and how they can achieve at a higher level.

As an evaluation instrument, it allows the teacher to give a fair and unbiased judgment of student work. Because it is given to students prior to a task, referred to during class, and used as assessment over a period of time, evaluating using this scale gives a clear judgment of student ability and performance.

## The Language of Rubrics

**Level 1:** This is the minimum that you would expect from a student who will be receiving a passing (50-59%) grade. Often the term "limited" is used as a descriptor for Level 1. For example, if your criteria is: uses correct terminology the minimum you might expect is that students will use the most common or familiar terms. This is a limited capacity, but clearly defines for the students what the level of quality is for a Level 1 performance. Your Level 1 performance descriptor might read: is able to use common and familiar terms correctly.

**Level 2:** This is a mediocre performance level. The student has clearly passed but is not the standard you would expect (60-69%). Often the term "some" is used as a descriptor for Level 2. For example, if your criteria is: uses correct terminology, you would expect that students can move one step beyond Level 1. Since level one indicates the student uses common or familiar terms, the next step is that they are using some of the newer terminology as well. This is a "some" capacity, but a definite and clear difference from Level 1. Your Level 2 performance descriptor might read: is able to use common, familiar, and some newly acquired terms correctly.

**Level 3:** This is a standard expectation performance level - what you expect the general population of students are capable of demonstrating (70-79%). Often the term "considerable" is used as a descriptor for Level 3. For example, if your criteria is: uses correct terminology you would expect that students can move one step beyond Level 2. Since level two indicates the student uses common, familiar and many new terms, the next step is that they are using most or all of the newer terminology in their written and oral work. This is a "considerable" capacity, but a definite and clear difference from Level 2. It is not perfect, but a standard level of expected competence and should paraphrase your criteria which is the standard you have set. Your Level 3 performance descriptor might read: is able to use common, familiar, and most newly acquired terminology correctly.

**Level 4:** This is a standard performance which is beyond the standard expectation performance level - one that requires the student to move beyond what is taught in the classroom (80 - 100%). Often the term "high degree" is used as descriptors for Level 4. For example, if your criteria is "uses correct terminology", you would expect that student to move one step beyond a Level 3. Students may pick up more obscure words you use in class but do not necessarily expect students to know and remember. They may use the words correctly in a new context, apply a global perspective, or apply the words to convey meaning about themselves. Your Level 4 performance descriptor might read: is able to use common, familiar and all newly acquired terminology correctly.

## Quality and Quantity

It is a good idea to have a balance of quality and quantity indicators within a rubric. Some criteria are best described using quality performance descriptors, while others are much easier to assess/evaluate using quantity performance descriptors.

### Examples:

**Quantity:** 1-2, 3-4, several, many, variety, wide variety

**Quality:** uses examples, consistent, accuracy, detail, comprehensive

Rubric Builder has been written incorporating a wide variety of Quality and Quantity level descriptors.

## **Rubric Creation - Not an Individual Task**

There are many choices one can make in building a rubric, especially in the language you choose as your criteria and level performance descriptors. Not all opinions will be the same and there is room for choice and interpretations. The most difficult task in creating rubrics, is to write out level descriptors in plain language that can be clearly understood and interpreted by your audience. The easiest method is to begin with a ready made rubric and adjust it to suit your needs and those of your students.

Rubric Builder can be a finished product or a starting point in writing rubrics. It offers you the opportunity to interact with the program so that you are not alone in the creating process. Rubric Builder offers you an opportunity to edit any of the criteria to best suit your needs in the classroom. Another way to use rubric builder is to create with the class. Using a tablet or projector, your class can quickly choose criteria for the task being assigned. Rubric Builder offers you the foundation and the opportunity to modify the language with your class. The time to create a meaningful and useful rubric is substantially reduced by using Rubric Builder as a classroom assessment/evaluation tool.

## **Rubric Format**

Rubric Builder has been created to give you a choice of presentation. From first-hand experience, teachers in the classroom have found that creating a rubric from levels 4-1 (left to right) has resulted in higher achievement by students in the classroom. The reason is fairly simple. Students read from left to right and many do not read the whole page. You will want students to read the best first and allow them to strive to be the best that they can be. If students read Level 1 first, often they will choose to shoot for the lowest possible score and miss the mark altogether. Other points of view are that students may be discouraged by reading the highest level first and not attempt the task. Students may require a simple checklist to begin. Rubric Builder builds will produced these as well.

## **Rubric Simplicity**

A rubric can contain various pieces of information. Using the new Ontario Curriculum, you may wish to add Achievement Chart Categories, Expectations, a checklist, plus the task, criteria and levels of assessment/evaluation. Be cautious in over-populating a rubric. You may wish to print a student version which is simple and to the point. Rubric Builder offers you the opportunity to keep it simple.

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