

Scoring Rubrics

Rubrics are an important element of quality classroom assessments. Sometimes called *scoring guides*, **scoring rubrics** are rating scales that consist of preestablished performance criteria. As a teacher, you can use rubrics to differentiate between levels of student performance on a rating scale, and students can even use them to guide their learning. Rubrics can be used to specify performance criteria for a variety of learning activities—writing an essay, conducting a science experiment, or delivering an informative speech.

Students benefit from seeing examples of excellent work appropriate to their grade and ability levels. “Given clear requirements for success, students are better able to gauge the appropriateness of their own preparation and thus gain control over their own academic well-being. Students who feel in control of their own chances for success are more likely to care and to strive for excellence” (Stiggins, 2005, p. 40).

In addition to developing rubrics, you should collect models of exemplary performances and products by your students. Besides using a scoring rubric to learn about the specific elements that will be used to assess the quality of their work, students must see what quality looks (sounds, feels, smells, or tastes) like. Over time, you should collect sets of excellent work such as graphs, nonfiction writing, solutions to open-ended math problems, and designs for science experiments from students. Less than exemplary work may also be used in the process of teaching students how to use the rubrics.

Rubrics are typically used as scoring instruments when teachers evaluate student performances or products resulting from a performance task. There are two types of rubrics: holistic and analytic. A **holistic rubric** requires the teacher to score the overall process or product as a whole, without judging the component parts separately (Nitko, 2001). Figure 11.6 presents a generic framework for developing a holistic scoring rubric based on a 4-point scale.

As an illustration, a high school English teacher might use the framework presented in Figure 11.6 for holistic assessment of students’ ability to write a clear, well-organized essay. A score of 5 would mean the essay reflected characteristics such as clear organization, accurate and precise use of words, adequately developed ideas, insightful analysis of the topic, and effective transitions from paragraph to paragraph. An essay with a score of 3 might have grammatical errors, problems with logic, confusing sentences, and a lack of transitions from paragraph to paragraph. And an essay with a score of 1 might be very confusing and contain only a few sentences that are clear and understandable.

Score	Description
5	Performance or product reflects complete understanding of the assessment task or problem. The performance or product reflects all requirements of the task or problem.
4	Performance or product reflects considerable understanding of the assessment task or problem. The performance or product reflects all requirements of the task or problem.
3	Performance or product reflects partial understanding of the assessment task or problem. The performance or product reflects nearly all requirements of the task or problem.
2	Performance or product reflects little understanding of the assessment task or problem. Many requirements of the task or problem are missing.
1	Performance or product reflects no understanding of the assessment task or problem.
0	Task or problem not undertaken.

FIGURE 11.6 Generic framework for a holistic scoring rubric

Unlike the holistic scoring rubric, an **analytic rubric** requires that the teacher score separate, individual parts of the product or performance according to prespecified criteria, then add the individual scores to obtain a total score (Moskal, 2000; Nitko, 2001). Figure 11.7 presents a generic framework for developing an analytic scoring rubric based on a 4-point scale.

Let's continue with the example that focuses on teaching essay writing at the high school level. A teacher might evaluate students' essays with reference to the following four criteria, each of which would be evaluated according to the description of performances in Figure 11.7 at the "beginning," "developing," "accomplished," and "highly accomplished" levels:

- Criterion 1: The essay is organized clearly—the introduction sets the stage for what follows and the conclusion summarizes key ideas.
- Criterion 2: The essay is free of grammatical errors.
- Criterion 3: The essay has a unifying idea that is clear and easy to follow.
- Criterion 4: Effective paragraphing and transitions from one paragraph to the next provide an organizing structure and facilitate movement from one idea to the next.

Criterion	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Highly Accomplished	Score
Criterion 1	Performance or product reflects beginning level of performance.	Performance or product reflects emerging performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the highest level of mastery.	
Criterion 2	Performance or product reflects beginning level of performance.	Performance or product reflects emerging performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the highest level of mastery.	
Criterion 3	Performance or product reflects beginning level of performance.	Performance or product reflects emerging performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the highest level of mastery.	
Criterion 4	Performance or product reflects beginning level of performance.	Performance or product reflects emerging performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the mastery level.	Performance or product reflects performance at the highest level of mastery.	

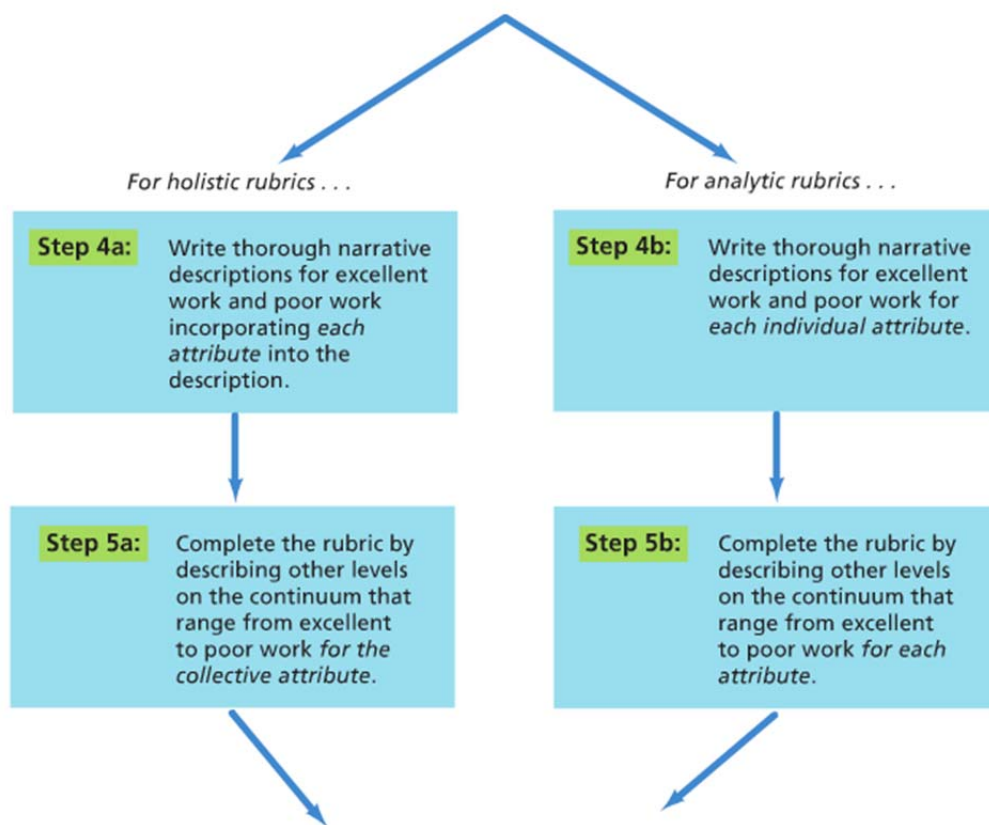
FIGURE 11.7 Generic framework for an analytic rubric

To help you develop scoring rubrics for eventual use in your classroom, Figure 11.8 presents a step-by-step process for designing holistic and analytic scoring rubrics.

Step 1: Reexamine the learning objectives to be addressed by the task.

Step 2: Identify specific observable attributes that you want to see (as well as those you don't want to see) your students demonstrate in their product, process, or performance.

Step 3: Brainstorm characteristics that describe each attribute.



Step 6: Collect samples of student work that exemplify each level.

Step 7: Revise the rubric, as necessary.

FIGURE 11.8 Designing scoring rubrics: A step-by-step procedure

Source: Craig A. Mertler, "Designing Scoring Rubrics for the Classroom," *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 2001, 7(25).