

## Guidelines for Creating Effective Rubrics

Use these guidelines to create rubrics that students can use for self- and peer assessment, and you can use to assign grades to projects.

1. Get student input on what should be included in the rubric.
  - Have students define what counts as exceptional, proficient, and needing improvement to help students internalize the expectations for a project or process.
  - Encourage students to go beyond what can be counted in defining levels of performance. Discussions about how to describe higher-order thinking in rubrics can give a teacher ideas for the skills and concepts that require instruction.
2. Identify traits that meet your objectives.
  - Avoid including every relevant trait, and select traits to emphasize. All assessed traits should be addressed through instruction.
  - Make traits as specific as possible. For example, instead of using a term such as “critical thinking,” break the concept down into more observable components, such as “Asks questions” or “Determines bias.”
3. Determine levels of performance.
  - Decide how many levels you want to have. Four levels is common, though more or fewer levels can also be effective. One level should indicate proficiency, and one should describe exceptional performance. This encourages students to work to exceed expectations.
  - Label levels as numbers (4, 3, 2, 1) or words (excellent, good, fair, needs improvement). Levels can also be labeled with points that can be added for a numerical score.
4. Write descriptors for each trait at each level.
  - Describe specific behaviors or characteristics that can be identified by parents, students, and teachers.
  - Make the differences between levels clear.
  - Focuses descriptors on higher-order thinking, content understanding, and application.
  - Avoid using numbers, such as length, to differentiate among levels. In some cases, such as the number of sources, numbers may be appropriate, but, whenever possible, avoid attaching numbers to quality since they encourage students to focus on aspects of the work other than quality.