

Many instructors are aware of the importance of using rubrics while grading, but rubrics can be used in a variety of ways to improve the process of assessing major assignments. Consider how you might implement the following best practices in your own courses. What are some ways that you have used these ideas in your own teaching?

Use Rubrics to Make Grading More Effective:

- Provide students with more complete and targeted feedback
- Make grading more timely by enabling the provision of feedback soon after assignment is submitted/presented.
- Standardize assessment criteria among those assigning/assessing the same assignment.
- Facilitate peer evaluation of early drafts of assignment

Use Rubrics to Help Student Learning

- Convey your expectations about the assignment through a classroom discussion of the rubric prior to the beginning of the assignment
- Level the playing field by clarifying academic expectations and assignments so that all students understand regardless of their educational backgrounds.(e.g. define what we expect analysis, critical thinking, or even introductions/conclusions should include)
- Promote student independence and motivation by enabling self-assessment
- Prepare students to use detailed feedback

Other Uses of Rubrics

- Track development of student skills over several assignments
- Facilitate communication with others (e.g. TAs, communication center, tutors, other faculty, etc)
- Refine own teaching skills (e.g. by responding to common areas of weaknesses, feedback on how well teaching strategies are working in preparing students for their assignments)

How else do you use rubrics?

Based on your review of the sample rubrics on the following pages, please consider the following questions?

What are the most important/useful features of rubrics?

What features of rubrics seem problematic?

Changing Communities in Our City

Task Description: Each student will make a 5-minute presentation on the changes in one Portland community over the past thirty years. The student may focus the presentation in any way he or she wishes, but there needs to be a thesis of some sort, not just a chronological exposition. The presentation should include appropriate photographs, maps, graphs, and other visual aids for the audience.

	Excellent	Competent	Needs work
Knowledge/ understanding 20%	The presentation demonstrates a depth of historical understanding by using relevant and accurate detail to support the student's thesis. Research is thorough and goes beyond what was presented in class or in the assigned texts.	The presentation uses knowledge that is generally accurate with only minor inaccuracies and that is generally relevant to the student's thesis. Research is adequate but does not go much beyond what was presented in class or in the assigned text.	The presentation uses little relevant or accurate information, not even that which was presented in class or in the assigned texts. Little or no research is apparent.
Thinking/ inquiry 30%	The presentation is centered around a thesis, which shows a highly developed awareness of historiographic or social issues and a high level of conceptual ability.	The presentation shows an analytical structure and a central thesis, but the analysis is not always fully developed or linked to the thesis.	The presentation shows no analytical structure and no central thesis.
Communication 20%	The presentation is imaginative and effective in conveying ideas to the audience. The presenter responds effectively to audience reactions and questions.	Presentation techniques used are effective in conveying main ideas, but they are a bit unimaginative. Some questions from the audience remain unanswered.	The presentation fails to capture the interest of the audience and/or is confusing in what is to be communicated.
Use of visual aids 20%	The presentation includes appropriate and easily understood visual aids, which the presenter refers to and explains at appropriate moments in the presentation.	The presentation includes appropriate visual aids, but these are too few, are in a format that makes them difficult to use or understand, or the presenter does not refer to or explain them in the presentation.	The presentation includes no visual aids or includes visual aids that are inappropriate or too small or messy to be understood. The presenter makes no mention of them in the presentation.
Presentation skills 10%	The presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard, using eye contact, a lively tone, gestures, and body language to engage the audience.	The presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard but tends to drone or fails to use eye contact, gestures, and body language consistently or effectively at times.	The presenter cannot be heard or speaks so unclearly that she or he cannot be understood. There is no attempt to engage the audience through eye contact, gestures, or body language.

Figure 1.6 Part 4: Three-level rubric: Description of dimensions with all levels of performance described.

Source: Stevens and Levi (2005) Introduction to Rubrics. pg. 14

Breihan's Grading Scale for Argumentative Essays in Western Civilization Course

This scale describes the common types of paper but may not exactly describe yours; my mark on the scale denotes roughly where your essay falls. More precise information can be derived from comments and conferences with the instructor.

Grade

- F**
 - 1. The paper is dishonest.
 - 2. The paper completely ignores the questions set.
 - 3. The paper is incomprehensible due to errors in language or usage.
 - 4. The paper contains very serious factual errors.
- D**
 - 5. The paper simply lists, narrates, or describes historical data and includes several factual errors.
 - 6. The paper correctly lists, narrates, or describes historical data but makes little or no attempt to frame an argument or thesis.
 - 7. The paper states an argument or thesis, but the argument or thesis does not address the question set.
- C**
 - 8. The paper states an argument or thesis, but supporting subtheses and factual evidence are:
 - Missing
 - Incorrect or anachronistic
 - Irrelevant
 - Not sufficiently specific
 - All or partly obscured by errors in language or usage
 - 9. The paper states an argument on the appropriate topic, clearly supported by relevant subtheses and specific factual evidence, but counterarguments and counterexamples are not mentioned or answered.
- B**
 - 10. The paper contains an argument, relevant subtheses, and specific evidence; counterarguments and counterexamples are mentioned but not adequately answered:
 - Factual evidence is incorrect, missing, or not specific.
 - Linking subtheses are either unclear or missing.
 - Counterarguments and counterexamples not clearly stated; employs "straw man" argument.
- A**
 - 11. The paper adequately states and defends an argument and answers all counterarguments and counterexamples suggested by:
 - Lectures
 - Reading assignments (specific arguments and authors are mentioned by name)
 - Common sense

EXHIBIT 4.3

Checklist for Analysis of Newspaper Editorials

- I have chosen an editorial that takes a position on a debatable issue of public policy at the local, state, or national level.
- I have attached a copy of the editorial to this paper.
- I have summarized the editorial's main point in a few sentences. The summary is less than 10 percent of the length of my analysis.
- I have NOT focused on whether I agree or disagree with the author's position; instead, I have analyzed the editorial.
- I have analyzed the editorial in the ways we have been learning in class, including:
 - how the writer explains the background and sets the stage
 - what audience the writer appears to be addressing
 - how the writer states what she or he wants the audience to do or believe
 - how the writer tries to convince or change the audience
 - the type and quality of evidence the writer uses
 - the accuracy and integrity of any statistics or data the writer uses
 - unstated assumptions behind the writer's position
 - writer's bias or use of loaded terms
- I have evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the editorial in terms of its effectiveness for its audience.
- I have included an evaluation of the integrity of the writer in avoiding bias, prejudice, distortion of facts, or unsupported claims.