

What is a valid rubric?

A rubric “is valid to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of results that are part of the proposed uses of the assessment.”—
Linda Suskie, Assessment and Accreditation Consultant

For example, using a math rubric to place students in an English class is NOT a valid use of that rubric.

Good rubrics give useful results: the language should be clear and should minimize evaluative terms, such as good, poor, appropriate, average, adequate, mediocre, above average, limited, and proficient.

The main purpose of a rubric is to grade student work fairly, consistently, and transparently.

Best Practices for Creating Rubrics

- 1) Articulate the rubric’s purpose.
- 2) Create the rubric before creating the assignment (if possible).
- 3) Start with clear student learning outcomes.
- 4) Explicate the key/essential traits of the SLOs.
- 5) Identify and label performance labels: include an appropriate range of outcome levels: at least three levels but no more than five.
- 6) Define the minimally adequate level (passing).
- 7) Create the description of every trait.
- 8) Develop and review the learning activity to accompany the rubric.
- 9) Try out rubric and revise as needed.

Give students the rubric with the assignment to help guide students in understanding what they are being asked to learn and demonstrate.

Relax! There are no perfect rubrics. Remember that rubrics are works in progress!
Revise often and as need be.

Students learn what they are graded upon, so determining what students will be graded upon should be the first consideration—ideally—when creating assignments.

Don'ts for Creating Rubrics

- 1) It is best not to have an elaborate approval process for rubrics, as in department rubrics, for faculty will then be reluctant to change the rubrics.
- 2) Avoid point ranges in the rubric categories, if you can, as the point of rubrics is to maximize fairness. According to Linda Suskie, author of *Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*,

It's less a matter of subjectivity than one of fairness and consistency. One of the purposes of using a rubric is to grade student work fairly, consistently, and transparently. If a student does the level of work described in a particular rubric box, the student earns whatever score or grade is assigned to that box.

If the box is worth a range of points (say 5 to 8 points), then fairness, consistency, and transparency is jeopardized. The description in the box doesn't make clear why one student may earn 5 points and another may earn 8 points. The student earning 5 points doesn't know what his or her shortcomings are and therefore doesn't know what to improve. And, without specified criteria, a faculty member may (unintentionally) introduce biases or irrelevant information into the decision to award 5, 6, 7, or 8 points.

--from an email sent to Theresa Lavarini, April 9, 2017.