Rubrics for Writing Assessment

Rubrics are composed of four basic parts. In its simplest form, the rubric includes:

 - **A task description**. The outcome being assessed or instructions students received for an assignment.

 - **The characteristics to be rated (rows)**. The skills, knowledge, and/or behavior to be demonstrated.

 - **Levels of mastery/scale (columns)**. Labels used to describe the levels of mastery should be tactful but clear. Commonly used labels include:

- Not meeting, approaching, meeting, exceeding
- Exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable
- Advanced, intermediate high, intermediate, novice.
- 1, 2, 3, 4

- The description of each characteristic at each level of mastery/scale (cells).

Developing Your Rubric as a Class

Step 1: *Identify what you want to assess*

Step 2: *Identify the characteristics to be rated (rows)*

 - Specify the skills, knowledge, and/or behaviors that you will be looking for.

 - Limit the characteristics to those that are most important to the assessment.

Step 3: *Identify the levels of mastery/scale (columns).*

Tip: Aim for an even number (4 or 6) because when an odd number is used, the middle tends to become the "catch-all" category.

Step 4: *Describe each level of mastery for each characteristic (cells).*

 - Describe the best work you could expect using these characteristics. This describes the top category.

 - Describe an unacceptable product. This describes the lowest category.

 - Develop descriptions of intermediate-level products for intermediate categories.

Important: Each description and each category should be mutually exclusive.

Step 5: *Test rubric.*

 - Apply the rubric to the assignment.

Tip: It is often useful to establish the minimum score needed for the student work to be deemed passable. For example, faculty members may decided that a "1" or "2" on a 4-point scale (4=exemplary, 3=proficient, 2=marginal, 1=unacceptable), does not meet the minimum quality expectations. They may set their criteria for success as 90% of the students must score 3 or higher. If assessment study results fall short, action will need to be taken.

Step 6: *Discuss with peers and instructor. Review feedback and revise.*

Six Trait Essay Scoring Guide

Traits	100-90	89-70	69-0
Ideas and Content	This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme or story line.	The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still too general.	The paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To find meaning in the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy details.
Organization	The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or storyline. The order, structure, and presentation of information are compelling, so the reader moves through the text.	The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without much confusion.	The writer lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details, and events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion. There is no internal structure.
Voice	The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individualistic, expressive, and engaging. The writer is involved in the text, sensitive to the needs of the audience, and writing to be read.	The writer seems sincere, but not fully involved in the topic. The result is pleasant, but not compelling.	The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved or distanced from the topic and/or the audience. As a result, the writing is lifeless or mechanical. Depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or jargonistic.
Word Choice	Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting and natural way.	The language is functional, even though it lacks punch. It is easy to figure out the writer's meaning on a general level.	The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, searching for words to convey meaning.
Sentence Fluency	The writing has an easy flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.	The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.	The reader has to practice to give this paper a fair interpretive reading.
Conventions	The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions. Grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling and paragraphing enhance readability. The reader can easily overlook a few minor errors unless hunting for them specifically.	The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standing writing conventions. Conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability. At other times, errors are distracting and impair readability.	Errors in spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar, capitalization and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader. The text is very difficult to read.