



Explain Rubric and Checklist Criteria

Students may assume that rubrics are used by their instructors when grading and may not fully appreciate how to use them as a tool to better understand your expectations. To ensure that all students understand the role of a rubric in helping them meet the assignment requirements and understand how they will be graded using the rubric, set aside time to review assignment rubrics and checklists with your students.

Begin by explaining the purpose of the assignment, including how it will help them meet course outcomes and how the skills they will be practicing will help them in their future assignments, courses, and careers.

Next, provide a clear explanation of the assignment instructions. Be sure to point out any individual components in your assignment. For example, a written piece may have an introduction, thesis statement, closing, and list of resources.

Next, display the rubric or checklist and point out connections between the assignment and the rubric criteria or items on the checklist. For example, if your assignment requires peer-reviewed sources to support an argument, or expects students to include visuals, those specific requirements should be included in the rubric or on the checklist.

If you are using an analytic or holistic rubric, explain the meaning of the performance levels, being sure to point out the differences between meeting, not meeting, or exceeding expectations. For a single-point rubric, explain that the language in the rubric describes meeting the expectations and that you will provide comments if their assignment exceeds expectations and suggestions for improvement and next steps if their assignment does not yet meet expectations.

Also, be sure students understand the process for using the rubric, for example, if they will be required to revise and resubmit an assignment if it does not meet expectations. When using a checklist, let students know if you expect them to check off each element and include the checklist when they submit the assignment and if you will return assignments that do not include all elements on the checklist before grading it.

Finally, explain the performance-level descriptors by highlighting the differences in language between them. For example, quantify the differences between “some” and “most.” It can be particularly helpful to have examples of prior student work at different performance levels. Another helpful experience designed to assist students in better using checklists or rubrics is to have students work in groups, assessing samples of student work using the grading tools.

Create a Video Explaining Your Rubric

If you are teaching online or if your course schedule does not allow time to explain your grading tool, consider creating a video or voice-over explanation using the assignment instructions, how it is related to the course learning objectives, and the rubric. Providing a video also allows students to revisit the directions if they need further clarification. If the assignment is complex, it may be helpful to set up a forum for discussing both the expectations and the grading criteria. To capture students’ attention, consider giving the video a title such as “How to Earn an A on This Assignment.”

To record your audio or video, you can view the rubric on your computer and record yourself as you talk through each section. Include examples, showing how prior students effectively used the rubric, to motivate your students in effectively utilizing the tool.



For rubrics that have several dimensions or criteria, you might visually highlight aspects of the rubric with your explanations or examples. PowerPoint has features for highlighting text, and below are some tips for creating a video rubric explanation using it.

1. Start with an overview of the rubric on the first slide. You can copy and paste the rubric from a Word or Excel document, or you can create a table in PowerPoint with the same number of rows and columns as your rubric and then copy and paste the text. The second option allows you to add color and formatting to the different cells. Rubric tables usually list the dimensions to be evaluated in the rows and the performance levels in the columns.
2. If your rubric has three or more dimensions, consider making a separate slide for each dimension. This may make it easier for your students to visually process the information.
3. To draw attention to specific aspects of your rubric as you are discussing it, you can [use your mouse as a laser pointer](#) as well as [the PowerPoint pen or highlighter to draw directly on your slides](#). All of these features are recorded.
4. There are various options for recording your PowerPoint with voice-over narration. You can save your presentation as a PowerPoint Show and upload it onto your course site. The PowerPoint Show will play like a video when your students click on it. You can also export your PowerPoint recording as an .mp4 file, which you can upload directly onto your course site. Alternatively, you can post the file on YouTube and embed the link in your course site or email it to students. [Explore some additional information on turning your PowerPoint into a video.](#)

Suggested Resources

For more information on developing a rubric with clear criteria and well-defined levels of performance, consider reviewing the Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning at Brown University's resource on creating performance levels for rubrics at the [Sheridan Teaching and Learning Center](#), the [Poorvu Center at Yale University's](#) content on creating and using rubrics, and the [Eberly Center at Carnegie Mellon University's](#) site for assignment-specific examples of rubrics.

Additional Resources

Feldman, J. (2020, January 27). *Improved grading makes classrooms more equitable*. Inside Higher Ed.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/01/27/advice-how-make-grading-more-equitable-opinion>

Panadero, E., & Jonsson, A. (2020). A critical review of the arguments against the use of rubrics. *Educational Research Review*, 30, Article 100329.

Uhlmann, E. L., & Cohen, G. L. (2005). Constructed criteria: Redefining merit to justify discrimination. *Psychological Science*, 16(6), 474–480.