

# Tech Snacks: Creating & Using Rubrics

Assessment and grading can be an overwhelming task for faculty, and a mystifying process to students. How do you maintain objectivity, clearly articulate grading criteria, and provide feedback in a timely manner? Grading rubrics can save time, avoid unintentional bias, and give students clear guidelines for how they're being assessed. Many of the ideas from this handout come from an excellent article published in *The Journal of Effective Teaching* (Wolf & Stevens, 2007).<sup>1</sup>

## How do I Write a Rubric?

### Identify Performance Criteria

The first step when developing a rubric is to identify the criteria that define the product or performance. Between three and six criteria usually work best. Some criteria can be weighted more heavily than others. Each criteria should be observable and objectively measurable.

Writing Quality			

### Set Performance Levels

The second step is to decide how many levels of performance are appropriate for the assessment. Most rubrics have between three and six rating levels, and the number of levels generally depends on the purpose of the assessment. If the assessment is summative — a big midterm or final assignment — then fewer levels make grading simpler for the instructor. If the assessment is formative — early drafts, weekly discussions, short papers — then more granular, descriptive levels can give students more detailed formative feedback.

	Above Proficient	Proficient	Below Proficient
Writing Quality			

### Create Performance Descriptions

The third step is to write a description for each cell in the rubric. Descriptions should be as brief as possible, but should accurately explain each *specific attribute* of the student's product or performance that you plan on examining. It can be helpful to mentally list each attribute for a criteria before writing the descriptions. For example, "Writing Quality" might include readability, formatting style, and mechanical quality (punctuation, spelling, grammar).

	Above Proficient	Proficient	Below Proficient
Writing Quality	Paper is clear, well organized, and easy to read. Follows APA style and contains no mechanical errors.	Paper is generally clear and concise. Follows APA style, and is mostly free of mechanical errors.	Paper is poorly organized, does not follow APA style, or contains multiple errors that distract or confuse the reader.

### Assign Point Values

The last step is to assign point values to each criteria level, so that a total grade can be calculated for each student submission being assessed. You might consider having a performance level that is worth zero points, for students that totally fail to complete part (or all) of an assignment. You can also assign different weights for different criteria. For example, Writing Quality would be heavily weighted in a term paper, but might carry less weight in a weekly discussion post.

<sup>1</sup> Wolf, K., & Stevens, E. (2007). The Role of Rubrics in Advancing and Assessing Student Learning. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 7(1). Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1055646.pdf>.

## When Not to Use a Rubric

Rubrics obviously take time to develop, so they may not be appropriate for small, short-term assignments, unless you're using similar rubrics for multiple assignments. It's also worth noting that rubrics cannot be attached to Quizzes in Brightspace.

Another concern is that in some situations, a rubric may actually constrain student creativity. For activities intended to encourage a lot of student freedom in form, style, or procedure, a restrictive rubric might prevent students from taking risks.

## How Can Brightspace Help?

The Rubric tool in Brightspace (found under the Progress button) lets you create rubrics within a course, which can then be attached directly to course activities and used as a direct grading instrument. The Rubric tool was recently updated with a much more user-friendly interface, making it easier than ever to create new rubrics in Brightspace.

### Rubrics

New Rubric

Rubric scores are also now included in the student view of Grades, so students can easily see how they were scored on a rubric.

You can link a Rubric to Assignments, Discussion Topics, or directly to unassociated Grade items for assessing non-Brightspace activities. Edit the activity you want to link with a rubric, and click on the "Assessment" tab of that activity. You'll be able to choose from all of the Published rubrics in that course. You can attach a rubric to more than one activity.

## Rubric Status

Rubric Statuses	When creating a new rubric, Brightspace defaults to draft status. During draft status, rubrics can be built and edited but <b>not</b> associated with any type of activity.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Draft	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published	Once you've finished the rubric and are certain that no further changes are needed, you can change the rubric status to published. Now the rubric can be associated with course activities and used to evaluate student work. <i>Once a rubric is associated with an activity, it cannot be edited.</i> The easiest way to change an existing rubric is to make a copy. The new copy can be changed and the old rubric can be archived.
<input type="checkbox"/> Archived	

Archiving a rubric removes them from your list of draft and published rubrics but retains all of the grades from prior associations. To find an archived rubric, select "Show Search Options," scroll down and select "Archived," and click search.

Search For...



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