Using Rubrics

A rubric is a coherent set of performance standards for student work that clarifies your **learning goals**. The rubric development process can help you distill your assignment's purpose and components, and using rubrics can often significantly decrease grading time. For students, a rubric clarifies expectations and lends transparency to grading.

There are many ways of organizing rubrics. Some are analytic, with scores ascribed across multiple domains, while others are holistic, assessing multiple criteria at once; some are specific to the assignment, while others are more general; some make use of a grid, while others do not. Rubrics differ in the way that they describe achievement of performance standards, and in the way they calculate toward a **summative** grade. There are some characteristics that all strong rubrics share, however, including careful word choice, consistency across domains, and purposeful reflection of course goals.

Some ways to use rubrics effectively:

While designing your rubric:
- You might find that consulting Bloom's Taxonomy helps you clarify the actions you're expecting your students to perform. (To be successful will they describe, defend, critique, or propose?)
- Remember that rubrics are an opportunity for visual communication, and can powerfully clarify expectations.
- Develop a methodology for the rubric score's intersection with your other grade calculations.
- Identify a strategy for integrating your use of the rubric with your marginal and holistic comments.

In the classroom:
- Use the rubric as a way to explain the assignment, its purpose, and its relation to the course's learning goals.
- Consider sharing model student work from previous semesters, and mapping it onto the rubric.
- Consider asking students to use the rubric for self-assessment or peer review exercises.

While grading:
- Quickly read a sample of student work before marking any rubrics, especially when using a new rubric.
- Be mindful of discrepancies between the grade the rubric dictates and the grade you feel the work deserves, taking notes for future iterations of the rubric.

References

Brookhart, Susan M. *How to Create and Use Rubrics for Formative Assessment and Grading.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2013.

Mertler, Craig A. "Designing Scoring Rubrics for Your Classroom." *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation* vol. 7, no. 25, 2011.

Pearce, Daniel L. "Guidelines for the use and evaluation of writing in content classrooms." *Journal of Reading*, vol. 27 no. 3, 1983, 212-218.

See also

Establishing Learning Goals
Evaluating Student Work
Formative and Summative Feedback