Rubrics

What is a rubric?

A rubric is a scoring/grading tool that's generally used for subjective assignments. In subjective assignments, rubrics help create a certain level of objectivity. As a result, learners are clearer about the expectations prior to submitting the assignment and are clear about their areas of weakness and strength when the assignment is returned. Rubrics help instructors evaluate levels of performance and communicate with students without the need to write extensive comments on an assignment.

Benefits of rubrics

- Communicate expectations with students: A rubric tells students what is expected of them, the grading criteria, what counts and what doesn't, and how their work is graded.
- Bring objectivity to subjective scoring.
- Allow for easy scoring and recording of it.
- Communicate grades to students: A graded rubric helps students understand how they were graded and what their areas of strength and weakness were, it also tells them how the grader arrived at the "score" the assignment earned.

Creating and Using Rubrics

Have you ever heard that a little hard work up front saves time in the end? Well this is definitely true in the case of rubrics. Rubrics are basically a simplified way to grade a complicated assignment. For example, when you are grading an essay, how do you decide whether it gets an A or a B? What about if you are assigning number grades to the essay? What's the difference between an 84 and an 86? It may seem much easier not to do the extra work to create a rubric, however once the grading begins, it's clear that the use of a rubric makes things easier. For one thing, rubrics save time because you simply have to look at the rubric and mark off points.

With a rubric that is created beforehand and shown to students, they will produce better quality work. They know what is expected. It saves problems afterwards because the students knew what was required, and they can see where they had points taken off.

Assessment literature supports that better assignments are produced when students are provided (as part of the assignment) with a rubric that clearly defines the grading standards and expectations of the instructor. Such a rubric should identify the criteria on which an assignment will be evaluated and the expectations for the range of possible grades for each criterion.

To build a rubric you need to identify the criteria that are important to the evaluation of the assignment. For each criterion you then need to identify the various levels of mastery associated with that element. This will be done on a multi-point scale. It is a good idea to provide as much description of what a particular point on the scale means as possible. There is no magic number for the scale. Three point scales (Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Below

Expectations) are common but four or five point scales also work fine. An interesting site that will help you build a customized rubric is found at:

- http://www.2learn.ca/construct/rubric/tlcrubric.html.

When using a rubric for grading, make sufficient copies in order to grade each student's assignment with the rubric (by circling scale points) and then attach the rubric to the student's assignment when it is returned. The student now has detailed feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of his or her assignment without you having to write a lot.

[*Some material from above adapted from:*
 http://712educators.about.com/cs/rubrics/a/rubrics.htm
http://www.rcampus.com/wikishowc.cfm?tt=rubric&tm=rubrics&sm=help&]

Examples of Rubrics

While developing a customized rubric can be an interesting and valuable project, it is not always necessary. Rubrics for assessing many skills that we have for our students are widely available. An Internet search will most likely turn up multiple rubrics for any given skill you might wish to assess. Search, for example, for "Oral Communications Rubric" and you'll be directed to so many choices you're sure to be overwhelmed.
There are several rubric directories also available on the Internet. These provide lists of rubrics from a variety of categories that you might be interested in. Check out the following:

- http://business.fullerton.edu/centers/CollegeAssessmentCenter/RubricDirectory/other_rubrics.htm.
    - *This directory is published by the Mihaylo College of Business and Economics at CSU-Fullerton. It contains a wide variety of categories sure to be of general interest (not just for Business Schools). Included are multiple rubrics in the areas of critical thinking, ethics, global awareness, group and peer evaluations, leadership, oral communication and presentations, people skills, problem solving, and written communication just to name a few.*
- http://www.winona.edu/air/rubrics.htm
    - *This is a great site at Winona State University. It includes rubrics contributed by many different universities. Offerings cut across multiple skill categories including the ones mentioned above but also including additional categories such as case analysis and classroom discussion. It even includes a couple rubrics that originated at San Diego State University.*
- http://www.novelapproachpbl.com/ProjectAssessmentTools.htm
    - *This directory is not as comprehensive as the first two listed however it does include an excellent Performing Arts rubric.*