

Mentor

COMMUNITY

A Guide to Rubrics

Savvy Strategies to Help you Succeed

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Introduction

As a Walden University student, you will need to become familiar with rubrics. Most instructors utilize a rubric to define their grading criteria and to establish clear expectations for assignments. When used to their full advantage, rubrics are beneficial to instructors and students alike.

WHAT IS A RUBRIC?

A rubric is an assessment tool, which allows instructors to proactively share the criteria they will use to grade an assignment. Rubrics help instructors to grade fairly and consistently; in turn, rubrics help you (the student) to understand instructors' expectations prior to submitting an assignment. Typically, a rubric defines the skills that instructors would like you to master through the assignment.

Skill

**Formulates
accurate, original
thesis**

In the first column, you'll find the skill or objective your instructor hopes you'll master through the assignment.

Mastery

- Thesis clearly addresses the assignment

- Thesis presents logical, insightful conclusion drawn accurately from evidence in the paper

- Thesis reflects what is argued in the body of the paper

Exceptional

- Thesis clearly addresses the assignment

- Thesis presents conclusion drawn mostly accurately from evidence in the paper

- Thesis mostly reflects what is argued in the body of the paper

Competent

- Thesis does not address the assignment completely

- Thesis presents conclusion which is not clearly tied to the evidence in the paper

Developing

- No thesis OR

- Thesis is only loosely tied to the assignment

- Thesis presents conclusion which is not tied logically to evidence

Note: The example above represents a partial rubric. Most Walden University rubrics are comprised of 5-8 skills.

HOW DOES A RUBRIC WORK?

A rubric should be read left to right, starting with the skill identified in the first column. Then, moving right, each column describes a different level of mastery. Levels of mastery are similar to grades (A, B, C, D), but they are more descriptive. In the rubric below, “Mastery” and “Exceptional” indicate that a skill has been achieved, while “Competent” and “Developing” suggest a need for improvement. While more descriptive than letter grades, levels of mastery correspond to a certain number of points, so you will also receive a numeric score.

Start here!

Levels of Mastery

Skill	Mastery	Exceptional	Competent	Developing
Formulates accurate, original thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Thesis clearly addresses the assignment-Thesis presents logical, insightful conclusion drawn accurately from evidence in the paper-Thesis reflects what is argued in the body of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Thesis clearly addresses the assignment-Thesis presents conclusion drawn mostly accurately from evidence in the paper-Thesis mostly reflects what is argued in the body of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Thesis does not address the assignment completely-Thesis presents conclusion which is not clearly tied to the evidence in the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No thesis OR-Thesis is only loosely tied to the assignment-Thesis presents conclusion which is not tied logically to evidence

Note: Depending on the course and assignment, the rubric may contain additional levels of mastery.

HOW DOES A RUBRIC WORK?

Each level of mastery is defined by the criteria below it. It's best to review the rubric before and after completing your assignment. That way, you will be able to shape your assignment around the instructor's grading criteria, *and* you will have the opportunity to double-check that your work meets the expectations of the rubric prior to submission.

Skill	Mastery	Exceptional	Competent	Developing
Formulates accurate, original thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Thesis clearly addresses the assignment-Thesis presents logical, insightful conclusion drawn accurately from evidence in the paper-Thesis reflects what is argued in the body of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Thesis clearly addresses the assignment-Thesis presents conclusion drawn mostly accurately from evidence in the paper-Thesis mostly reflects what is argued in the body of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Thesis does not address the assignment completely-Thesis presents conclusion which is not clearly tied to the evidence in the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No thesis OR-Thesis is only loosely tied to the assignment-Thesis presents conclusion which is not tied logically to evidence

An "Exceptional" assignment accomplishes these 4 criteria.

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HOW DOES A RUBRIC WORK?

After your assignment has been graded, review your instructor's feedback. In addition to his/her written comments, reconsider the rubric to better understand how you might improve on the next assignment. If, for example, you achieved "Exceptional," instead of "Mastery," look for key differences in the criteria associated with each level of mastery. On future assignments, you can pay special attention to improving in those areas.

Skill	Mastery	Exceptional	Competent	Developing
Formulates accurate, original thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Thesis clearly addresses the assignment- Thesis presents logical, insightful conclusion drawn accurately from evidence in the paper- Thesis reflects what is argued in the body of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Thesis clearly addresses the assignment- Thesis presents conclusion drawn mostly accurately from evidence in the paper- Thesis mostly reflects what is argued in the body of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Thesis does not address the assignment completely- Thesis presents conclusion which is not clearly tied to the evidence in the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No thesis OR- Thesis is only loosely tied to the assignment- Thesis presents conclusion which is not tied logically to evidence

The difference between "Mastery" and "Exceptional" lies between these two criteria. If needed, ask the instructor for additional feedback on how to improve in this area.

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WHY USE A RUBRIC?

There are many advantages to rubrics. Rubrics help you understand how an assignment will be graded, which allows them to avoid losing unnecessary points. Additionally, after submitting an assignment, rubrics provide thorough, specific feedback which empowers you to work towards self-improvement. For instructors, rubrics ensure that each student's work is evaluated according to the same standards.

Benefits of a Rubric

- Provide more descriptive feedback than a letter grade or percentage
- Establish clear expectations and grading criteria
- Foster fair and consistent grading practices
- Encourage self-improvement





Closing

Especially if you have never used one before, rubrics can feel overwhelming at first. However, with time and practice, rubrics become valuable tools that encourage you to learn from feedback and works towards self-improvement. To get the most out of a rubric, remember to:

- Review the rubric before you begin an assignment *and* prior to submitting your completed work.
- Ask your instructor if you have any questions about the rubric prior to completing and submitting an assignment. You can also reach out to your instructor **after** receiving a grade for additional clarification and feedback.

Questions? Email us at
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