



Time: 15 minutes 59 seconds

Index

- Lesson Overview
- Video Outline
- Your Learning Objectives
- Your Stops
- Suggested Discussion Questions
- Recommended Activities
- Suggested Resources
- Script

Lesson Overview

In this lesson you'll be introduced to:

- the importance of scoring rubrics in promoting fairness, focus, and efficiency;
- four general principles associated with good item-specific scoring rubrics;
- examples of ineffective and effective rubrics using various approaches;
- suggestions for teachers and instructional leaders to improve the evaluation of student work using item-specific rubrics; and,
- recommended activities and resources to deepen your understanding and use of item-specific scoring rubrics.

Video Outline

- Introduction (00:00-03:17)
- Item-Specific Scoring Rubric Principles and Examples (03:18-12:23)
- Summary: Putting It All Together (12:24-13:39)
- Tips For Your Role (13:40-15:03)
- Activities and Resources (15:04-15:59)
 - Recommended Activities
 - Suggested Resources

Your Learning Objectives

Record your objectives and points to focus on.

Your Stops

Make notes on stopping points and content discussion you would like the participants to take part in.

Stopping Point	Content Discussion	Notes

Suggested Discussion Questions

- How can scoring rubrics make the scoring of student work fairer, more focused, and more efficient?
- Why would the use of a general rubric not be effective in the scoring of responses to a specific constructed-response test question? What distinguishes an item-specific scoring rubric from a general scoring rubric?
- In what situations are quantitative scoring rubrics not effective?
- A common approach to developing an item-specific rubric is simply to mimic the general rubric format and using item-specific information in the score-point descriptors. What are two other rubric approaches and why might they be used?

Recommended Activities

- Use suggested resources to review existing scoring rubrics from texts and assessment program websites. Think about how they are consistent (or not) with what you learned from this lesson.
- After scoring a set of your student responses, return the students' work to them along with a copy of your rubric (or the rubric displayed or projected for all to see). Check to see that the students all understand why their responses earned the scores they were given.

- Rewrite a sample of your students' responses to a constructed-response question, eliminating any identifying information. Then form small groups of students, provide them with the sample responses and your rubric, and ask each team to score the responses as a group. In the larger group, ask how the teams scored each response, and discuss any discrepancies from the way you had scored the responses.
- Provide your students with a constructed-response question. Then have small groups of students develop a scoring rubric for the question. Have the teams share their rubrics with the larger group, and lead a discussion of them. The groups could have different constructed-response questions assigned to them.

Suggested Resources

Taylor, C. S. and Nolen, S. B. (2008). *Classroom Assessment: Supporting Teaching and Learning in Real Classrooms (2nd edition)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

[Sample Test Items](#) from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Released items on state assessment websites

Script

Slide 1

- Welcome to Lesson 8, Evaluating Student Work. In Lesson 7 you learned about general scoring rubrics that guide the development of item-specific rubrics, which are the focus of this lesson.

Slide 2

- An item-specific scoring rubric describes the specific content of responses to a question or task, responses earning different score points. These rubrics are most appropriately used to evaluate responses to relatively short tasks, such as 4-point constructed-response questions that require students to explain the reasoning behind their answers or show their work.
- Here's the item-specific scoring rubric we showed in Lesson 7. The question and rubric pertained to a passage describing a pesky raccoon's behavior and movements. Notice this rubric can only be used with this specific item or question. We'll come back to this example rubric later in the lesson to discuss other features.

Slide 3

- Here's an item-specific rubric associated with a question about a character in an excerpt from *Deliverance*. The question asks students to describe the character of Lewis using evidence to support their descriptions.
- Pause the video and take a good look at the rubric and think about what's wrong with it.
- So what's wrong with this rubric? We can answer this by asking two questions:
 - First, where is the line drawn between "in-depth analysis" and "reasonable description with support"?
 - Second, what's the difference between "identifies a likely attribute" and a "statement taken directly from the story" that identifies an attribute of Lewis?

- It would be difficult to be consistent scoring a large set of student responses using this rubric, particularly if done in more than one sitting.
- Item-specific score point descriptors should zero in on the content of possible responses and exemplify the differences between general terms used in the descriptors.
- In this lesson, you will see examples of ineffective rubrics as well as item-specific rubrics that have worked well.

Slide 4

- Remember from Lesson 7 that the use of scoring rubrics can help you
 - be consistent and therefore fair in your scoring of student work,
 - maintain your focus on the learning target or objective being measured, and
 - be more efficient when scoring a lot of student responses.
- The use of good rubrics will help you better understand what your students know and can do.
- When you share rubrics with students (either for formative use or after summative testing), they will gain a better understanding of what is expected of them.
- All of these can lead to improved student performance.

Slide 5

- This lesson has three main parts.
- Part 1 presents some general principles associated with good item-specific scoring rubrics and shows examples of both ineffective and effective rubrics using various approaches.
- Part 2 summarizes key ideas from the lesson.
- Part 3 offers tips for teachers and instructional leaders.

Slide 6

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Slide 7

- You'll find lots of rules for scoring rubrics in various resources.
- Here we identify four principles that should always be true about effective scoring rubrics.
[pause]
- They may seem obvious, yet they are easily violated.

Slide 8

- Principle 1 about better responses getting more points than poorer responses sounds like a no brainer. But vagueness in scoring rubrics is a common problem that works against this principle. The vague rubric you saw at the beginning in this lesson pertaining to the character of Lewis in Deliverance, would lead to violations of the principle because several score point descriptors were not distinct from one another.
- Adhering to Principle 2 by making score-point descriptors clear and distinct not only makes scoring go faster, it also helps assure that Principle 1 is followed.
- In the slides that follow we will look at other examples that explore clarity and distinctness.

Slide 9

- Here we revisit our raccoon question, but in this case, the rubric developer relies on the distinctions between the action words “interprets,” “explains,” and “identifies.” The intent in using such terms is to capture different levels of cognitive processing. But when applied to actual student responses, those distinctions alone don’t work very well.

Slide 10

- Here’s the effective rubric for this item you saw originally. Note that the score-point descriptors themselves are still somewhat general or vague, but the important item-specific information is contained in the Scorer Notes. When there are multiple possibilities for responses or pieces of supporting evidence, sometimes it’s less confusing to put that information in the separate notes rather than to try to embed it all within the score point descriptors. What’s important is that general or vague language can still be used if sufficient item-specific information is provided somewhere to clarify general or vague terms.
- This rubric illustrates another technique. Even though the content of responses appears in the Scorer Notes, there are still different ways responses can earn the same number of points. Hence the use of “OR” in the 2-point and 3-point descriptors. However, it can be confusing if too many ORs appear in a score-point descriptor. When that’s the case, a different rubric approach can be a lot simpler. Other approaches are shown in later slides.

Slide 11

- This item simply asks students to identify reasons why a simple electrical circuit containing certain components would not work. The terms “in-depth,” “adequate,” “partial,” and “limited” are the kinds of terms used in general rubrics intended to guide the development of item-specific rubrics. By themselves, however, they do not adequately distinguish among responses of different point. In this case, a simple quantitative rubric works well.

Slide 12

- Take a good look at this rubric. *[Pause]*
- Clearly a student who identifies more legitimate reasons the bulb doesn’t light has a better understanding of electrical circuits than a student who names fewer reasons. Again, notice the specific content of responses is given in the Scorer Notes below the score point descriptors.
- Some references on the topic of scoring rubrics recommend that you avoid quantitative rubrics. While this one works, a later slide will show one that doesn’t and why.

Slide 13

- The students’ task here is to design an investigation. Take a look at the question. *[Pause]*
- The rubric is an interesting one because of the hierarchical nature of the score-point descriptors. For students to earn 3 or 4 points, they must satisfy the unique requirement for that score point and the requirements for lesser score points as well.
- While it’s always nice if the score point descriptors can be kept brief, sometimes highlighting “handles” or key ideas in the descriptors can assist the scorer. Notice the words in ALL CAPS in these descriptors. For a more rigorous task involving the design of an investigation, separate

rubrics could be used to score for the quality of design (including control of variables) and for the appropriateness of data gathered and their analyses.

Slide 14

- A corollary to this rule would be that a student should be able to earn the most points without doing any more than the question asks. Rewarding a student for giving extra or extraneous information would be unfair to those who stay focused on the question and answer it well. In the same vein, punishing a student for making grammatical errors in a response to a question about a science concept, for example, would not lead to a score accurately reflecting his or her science knowledge.
- For our example, we return to our raccoon question and show just the 4-point descriptor. The question asked for ways (plural), but did not specify a number, so two should be adequate for a 4-point response. Giving more points to students identifying three ways would be unfair to those who gave two.
- Another way students try to earn extra points is to show their knowledge of content related to the concept being tested, but not asked for. A question we'll discuss later asks students to explain the stages of the earth's water cycle. Suppose a student started a response with, "The water cycle is one of four major earth cycles; the others are the carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen cycles." This is not necessarily a rubric problem, but just a case in which scorers should stick to an appropriate rubric and not be tempted to reward extraneous information.

Slide 15

- While general rubrics often consist of short paragraphs describing item responses earning different score points in general terms, item-specific rubrics might be structured very differently depending on the nature and structure of the question or the concept or skill being tested. Rubrics don't have to follow a single strict format to be consistent with the general rubric guiding their development.

Slide 16

- The argument for avoiding specific quantities in rubric descriptors is that reasons or pieces of supporting evidence given in a response can vary in their quality. So simply counting them may not separate better responses from weaker responses. In such cases, a quantitative rubric should probably be avoided.
- In the example you see here, a student who identifies the names of all five stages of the water cycle giving no explanations of them would be awarded no points – hardly an accurate reflection of his or her knowledge. Also, explanations of the stages provided by other students could be of varying quality. A correct name of a stage with a poor explanation would get no points.
- A very different approach to a rubric for this question would be better.

Slide 17

- Using this rubric, the water cycle item is very easy to score. Notice it uses a different approach than rubrics that simply describe 4-point responses, 3-point responses, etc. This one awards a point for each correct name of a water cycle stage and a point for each correct explanation.

- Notice there are ten possible points for the item. Remember, as explained in Lesson 7, there's nothing magical about the number four, but if you don't want this item to count more than others, you can always "collapse" score points. For example, 9 or 10 earned points could correspond to a 4. 7 or 8 points could correspond to a 3. And so on. Teachers can decide how much they want a particular question to be worth.

Slide 18

- Take a good look at this question. [*Pause*]
- Sometimes students of lower ability have a hard time getting started on challenging math questions. They don't have "entry" into the task and can't show what they might actually know that relates to the task. This item is scaffolded in that its parts reflect increasing sophistication in what is asked of the students. It starts with a low-level task of simply plotting points on a grid (an even lower-level task if the axes were already labeled for the student.) There are multiple ways the students can come up with the answer to Part B. Parts C and D are more challenging tasks involving algebra.
- This is a real easy question to score using this points-for-parts rubric. Take a quick look at this rubric. [*Pause*]
- The points-for-parts approach can work for items that have distinct parts regardless of the subject area.

Slide 19

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Slide 20

- If the score point descriptors in a rubric are distinct from one another, it is more likely that better responses will always earn more points than weaker responses.
- In creating item-specific rubrics, it's all right to borrow vague terms from general rubrics as long as you provide item-specific information that clarifies the differences between the score point descriptors. That information can go in the score point descriptors or in separate scorer notes.
- A rubric's approach often depends on the nature and structure of the item or the concept the item is addressing. For some items or tasks, quantitative rubrics and "points for parts" can work well.
- It's important that a scoring rubric and the scoring itself focus on what the item asks of the students. It is unfair to reward students for providing extraneous information in a response and equally unfair to penalize students for a response characteristic not a focus of the item.
- Brevity should be a goal for score point descriptors, but if it's difficult to avoid a fair amount of language in score point descriptors, highlighting key words or phrases can be helpful.

Slide 21

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Slide 22

- When scoring student responses to constructed-response questions, use item-specific scoring rubrics.

- A rubric should be considered a part of a constructed-response question, developed at the same time.
- After drafting a constructed-response question, you should write what you consider a response that would earn the maximum points. Then check to see that the question elicits all the ideas in your ideal response. Check the rubric to see that it is consistent with your ideal response. Edit the question and/or rubric if necessary.
- When scoring student responses to the question, it's all right if an unexpected response causes you to edit the rubric, but you may have to go back and rescore some responses whose scores are affected by the edits.
- Scribbled rubrics are OK for immediate use, but if you are likely to use the question again you might want to neaten it up, then store it with the question for future use.

Slide 23

- Teachers' tests and scoring rubrics, along with sample student responses, are artifacts that should be reviewed from time to time.
- These are good items to be shared and discussed occasionally at team meetings.
- Professional development activities should give attention to evaluating student work, and to developing and using scoring rubrics specifically.

Slide 24

- Here are two recommended activities to engage both teachers and students described more fully in the facilitator's guide for this lesson:
 - Review existing item-specific rubrics from various sources in light of what you've learned from this lesson. This activity would be a good one for teacher teams.
 - Have small groups of students use a rubric to score anonymous responses to a constructed-response question. This is one way of engaging students. Scoring their own work using rubrics is another option.

Slide 25

- These resources provide samples of item-specific scoring rubrics.
- The first is one of the books we recommended to teachers for use throughout their careers. Other books on classroom assessment would work.
- The other sources are websites for testing programs.