

What are Performance Assessments?

Have you ever performed tasks at work and been reviewed on them? Have you ever given a speech in class and been graded on it? Have you ever had to inspect an item or a person's performance? How were those graded and/or scored?

Performance Assessments continue to evolve as the fastest growing and most important assessments in any industry today including Education. They are used in a wide variety of methods including:

- Grading a long list of skills in Education including:
 - Speeches
 - Reports
 - Writing
 - Essay questions
 - Lab Experiments
 - Vocational skills
 - Physical Education skills
 - Employee reviews
 - Sales call reviews
 - Judging contests
 - Rating items or events
 - Inspections including
 - Restaurant
 - Building
 - Health
 - Safety
 - Vehicle
 - Driver's License driving test

In order to help students and employees grow effectively and efficiently, educators and employers develop Rubrics and Checklists to fairly and more objectively evaluate how people achieve on various objectives.

A Rubric or a Matrix defines two primary functions:

- **Objectives** – These are the goals each person or item is required to attain for a particular performance assessment.
- **Levels** – These identify what each person or item needs to achieve in order to be graded or scored at that particular Level.

This provides evaluators with a logical, less likely biased, fair and objective method of identifying student and/or employee strengths and weaknesses. With regard to the person being evaluated, it provides them with a clear and detailed criteria of the goals required to achieve a performance expectation.

A partial example of a Class Presentation Rubric is below:

Rubric: Class Presentation
Class Speech

Objectives	Levels			
	Emerging (emer)	Capable (cap)	Proficient (prof)	Exemplary (exemp)
	Demonstrates a willingness to attempt the objective.	Demonstrates an ability to perform the objective, but has significant improvements to make.	Demonstrates clear ability to perform at an acceptable level of achievement.	Demonstrates an ability to perform the objective that can serve as a benchmark example of success.
Speaks Clearly (sc)	scem weight: 1	scca weight: 2	scpo weight: 3	scex weight: 4
Considers articulation, tempo, volume and mispronunciations.	Speaks clearly and distinctly less than 75% of the time and/or mispronounces more than three words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly 75 to 84% of the time and/or mispronounces one to three words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly 85 to 92% of the time, and/or mispronounces one to three words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly 93 to 100% of the time, and does not mispronounces any words.
Stays on Topic (st)	stem weight: 1	stca weight: 2	stpo weight: 3	stex weight: 4

Figure 1: Example of a Class Presentation Rubric

The Objectives listed on the left side are the criteria each person is expected to master. The Levels listed across are the scale for each Objective. At each intersecting box of a particular Objective/Level, there is a description of the requirements to achieve a particular Level for each Objective. A Proficient level of achievement of the Speaks Clearly objective means this student mispronounced one to three words and did not spoke clearly and distinctly enough. When this is provided to the student it is clear to see what was accomplished and what the next step or expectation level is for this class/teacher/project to achieve the exemplary level.

EDUCATION

In Education, over 50% of the national and state standards are performance related – writing, reading, speaking, debate, showing your work, physical education skills, science labs and experiments, answering open ended or constructed response items are just some of the areas where performance is measured.

Educators use rubrics to objectively evaluate performance based skills and standards. Rubrics provide evaluators with a defined playing field to assess each person as objectively as possible. Rubrics allow those being assessed a road map of expectations and requirements to attain each level of achievement along the way. Fitting in with standards based learning, all goals are the same for everyone. The rubric should help take a lot of the subjective issues out of a performance assessment. The idea is to keep the assessment as fair and unbiased as possible while providing an objective score to help measure, compare, and grow. This will identify strengths and weaknesses of each student so that a teacher can focus on weaknesses individually. Ultimately, this will help teachers to improve state and national test scores and help meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. More importantly though, by discussing the assessment with each student, it will really help

them to understand exactly what they need to work and improve upon to become a better person.

COMMERCIAL/GOVERNMENT

In every employment scenario today, employees are reviewed. The majority of these assessments are performance based. Nearly every employee in this country receives a yearly Performance Review. Often though, employees do not receive specific feedback on the job they're doing throughout the year. Rubrics help employers to evaluate employees on the skills required to perform at that position. By utilizing rubrics throughout the year, supervisors can identify strengths and weaknesses quickly and provide feedback on areas required for improvement. Supervisors also develop objective data to support their decisions as to when and how they might entrust an employee with additional responsibilities.

Many organizations want to develop employees on a long term, productive career path with added levels of responsibility along the way. By creating expectations at each level, they can utilize rubrics to identify how employees progress while at the organization.

People are not the only ones given performance assessments. Often, organizations have a variety of inspections needed to be performed. A Checklist is an offshoot of the Rubric. These are typically utilized for pass/fail assessments requiring feedback to improve upon the weak or failed areas. Inspections can range from rating a piece of machinery performing in a larger manufacturing process to safety inspections on employees in a plant to building and restaurant inspections. Transportation companies need to inspect their vehicles whether it's a plane, train, bus, or automobile. There are a huge number of military inspections performed every day. Rubrics and Checklists are a great way to measure how items perform.