

This design guide can be used as educators create or revise scoring criteria. Scoring criteria describe the evidence that demonstrates performance at each achievement level for a performance indicator. Scoring criteria that are common across classrooms are an essential component of a proficiency-based system of learning, designed to promote equitable, challenging, and personalized outcomes for all students. Once written, the scoring criteria can be applied to a wide range of possible assessment tasks, forming the basis of scoring rubrics.

For additional information about how scoring criteria relate to the larger proficiency system, and for clarification on the terms and concepts referenced here, see our [framework for proficiency-based systems](#).

| TRAITS OF EFFECTIVE SCORING CRITERIA                                       | DO THIS   | DON'T DO THIS  |
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| <p><b>Scoring criteria articulate a clear progression of learning.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Align to a taxonomy of thinking skills (Webb's, Bloom's, etc.) consistently.</li> <li>■ Describe a logical sequence of increasingly challenging thinking skills, often on a 4-point scale, aligned with the performance indicator and taxonomy.</li> <li>■ Show progression through a change in the cognitive demand of verbs at each proficiency level or in the depth and detail to which a student completes a task of similar cognitive demand.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Progressions that result solely in more or longer work products by applying the same skill repeatedly.</li> <li>■ Progressions that don't describe distinguished work.</li> <li>■ Progressions with large leaps in thinking skills between levels of performance (e.g., requiring description at the developing level and evaluation at the proficient level).</li> <li>■ Writing criteria for the highest performance level in a way that equates to perfection or 100% accomplishment</li> <li>■ Using assessments that do not provide the opportunity for any student to demonstrate the highest performance level.</li> </ul> |

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| <p><b>Scoring criteria describe the quality of student work at each performance level.</b></p>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use precise, specific language and objective descriptions of the quality of evidence students produce at each proficiency level.</li> <li>■ For proficient and distinguished descriptions, include all elements of the performance indicator.</li> <li>■ Include specific, technical expectations (number of pages, number of sources, types of graphs, etc.) in a supplemental checklist or list of assignment requirements rather than in the scoring criteria. Use these technical expectations to determine if the assignment is complete or to inform habits of work assessments and feedback.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Using the number (e.g., “I can include 3–5 [elements]”) or frequency (e.g. “rarely,” “sometimes,” or “always”) of an element of performance.</li> <li>■ Vague descriptors (e.g., poor, excellent, high-quality, visually appealing). These are difficult to evaluate consistently and don’t clarify expectations.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Scoring criteria describe (in affirmative terms) what students can do at each level of performance.</b></p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Write scoring criteria from the student’s point of view. Starting with “I can…” or “Students can…” helps establish an affirmative tone.</li> <li>■ Use positive, specific language and an asset-based approach that focuses on what students can do to foster continual improvement.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Deficit-based descriptions and framing or statements that articulate undesirable learning outcomes (e.g., “I cannot [do something]”).</li> <li>■ Negative language that may reinforce unhelpful mindsets and emphasize learning deficits (e.g., “weak use [of something]”).</li> </ul>                                       |
| <p><b>Scoring criteria are task neutral; they can be applied to a variety of learning experiences and products.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Write scoring criteria for each performance indicator and use them to assess a variety of learning experiences or products.</li> <li>■ Create rubrics for any assessment or assignment by combining scoring criteria for the relevant performance indicators.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Scoring criteria that apply only to specific lessons, units, courses, projects, or assignments (e.g., “I can write a report that evaluates risk factors and prevention strategies related to smoking.”)</li> </ul>   |