

HOW TO UNPACK A RUBRIC



WHY LEARN HOW TO UNPACK A RUBRIC?

A rubric is a set of scoring guidelines for a project, a task or an award. Rubrics can be hard to understand. The language can be complex and is often linked to the Australian Curriculum. But there's good news: rubrics are not just for teachers! They're there for you, too. If you know how to make sense of a rubric, you'll unlock what your teacher is looking for in your assessment – so you'll stand a greater chance of achieving a higher score.

WHAT?

Understanding a rubric means you'll know how you're being assessed, which increases your chances of performing better.

IT'S OKAY TO...

- not know what you want to do
- get knocked into the pit
- move faster or go slower
- fail (as long as you tried)

WHAT YOU NEED

- Your rubric, for a task, assignment or award
- A dictionary or thesaurus
- Your teacher

WHAT TO DO

- 01 Find a starting point.** Find the medium/standard column in your rubric. This is the easiest place to work from. Usually, the sentences only vary slightly in columns before and after this one. If you'd like help breaking down the general features of a rubric, the University of Auckland has a great video: www.learninghub.ac.nz/assessment/understanding-rubrics/
- 02 Rewrite it!** In the middle column, look at each box (or criterion) individually. Highlight words you're unsure of. You can look these up in a dictionary or ask your teacher what they mean. The most helpful step is to rewrite each criterion in this column, in your own words, so you can understand what's required of you. Summarise each box so it's brief and clear to you. Check with your teacher if you're on the right track.
- 03 Look for key clues.** Highlight the key words in each box. These words usually include a verb (like 'analyse', 'discuss' or 'research') and a noun, which is the topic you're studying (such as chemistry, a recipe or a novel). These words tell you what you need to do – and the topic you need to do it for. It will help you stay on track in your assessment.

WHAT TO DO CONT:

04

Aim high. Once you've rewritten the middle column, look at the columns that indicate a higher level of achievement (often to the right). Which words are different? Highlight these: they're your answer to achieving a higher score!

For example, a Year 10 English rubric may state: 'Evaluation of how text structures can be used in innovative ways.' But the column next to this indicating a higher standard may include words like, 'effective' or 'sophisticated' before the word 'evaluation.' This means your **analysis** has to be deeper and more complex. You'll need to show you know more about text structures than the average student.



GOT IT?

- You can easily highlight or rewrite a rubric so you clearly understand what's required of you in your assessment.



TRY THIS

If you feel like you've nailed it but you want to level up, try this:

- Look up your unit of study on the Australian Curriculum website. This has further explanations of the standards in your rubric. It can help put things into perspective: www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/
- Highlight criteria in your rubric you feel you'll do well in. Use a different colour to highlight areas you'd like to improve in. This will give you a good idea of the scores you hope achieve and what you need to work on.
- Find examples of work with annotated grades and rubrics. Work Sample Portfolios can be found on the ACARA website: www.acara.edu.au, or your teacher may be able to provide some. This will help you see what the assessment looks like at different levels.

WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE?

- Start highlighting words you're unsure of in your rubric.
- Set up a meeting with your teacher to ask questions about your rubric.

SO WHAT?

- Deconstructing complex information builds your critical thinking and communication skills.
- Knowing what's expected of you and aiming to achieve this can help in a range of situations, such as in the workplace, or when managing a group project or playing sport.



IF YOU LIKED THIS ONE YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY...

- How to Revise for Exams
- How to Reduce Exam Anxiety
- How to Write Study Goals
- How to Write Personal Learning Goals
- How to Make Time for Study and Downtime
- How to Write a Formal Email