

Scoring Criteria: Overview

Scoring criteria describe the quality of evidence at different levels of achievement for each performance indicator. Common scoring criteria are an essential component of *a proficiency-based system of learning*, designed to promote equitable, challenging, and personalized outcomes for all students. There are four traits of effective scoring criteria:

Trait 1: Scoring criteria articulate a clear progression of learning.

Trait 2: Scoring criteria describe the quality of student work at each performance level.

Trait 3: Scoring criteria describe affirmatively what students can do at each level of performance.

Trait 4: Scoring criteria are task neutral; they can be applied to a variety of learning experiences and products.

The Value of Scoring Criteria

- Common scoring criteria **establish a clear definition of achievement** of the essential skills and knowledge defined in performance indicators that is shared by teachers, students, and families. By providing descriptions of different levels of performance, common scoring criteria promote consistent expectations.
- Scoring criteria can be used to evaluate a *wide range of possible tasks and assessments* while maintaining high expectations for all students. In this way, common scoring criteria support the design of assessments aligned with both the competencies and IEP or language learner accommodations.
- Through collaborative use of scoring criteria, **teachers calibrate their expectations** about evidence of proficiency. This common understanding further promotes consistency of scoring across teachers, improving the reliability of assessments.
- Scoring criteria are used **to create rubrics** for a range of specific assessment tasks. This practice promotes consistency and clarity of expectations as well as the transfer of skills across topics and content areas.
- Scoring criteria **help students understand** the specific knowledge and skills they must demonstrate to reach or exceed proficiency. These descriptions can be used to promote reflection and growth and to provide **specific, actionable feedback**, leading to increased student ownership and deeper levels of learning.
- Teachers can use the data and information from consistent use of scoring criteria **to determine appropriate supports and extensions** for a class or individual learners. This promotes equitable outcomes by meeting the needs of all students, including those on IEPs and language learners.

Traits and Guidelines

Trait 1

Scoring criteria articulate a clear progression of learning.

Do This

- Align to a taxonomy of thinking skills (Webb’s, Bloom’s, etc.) consistently.
- Describe a logical sequence of increasingly challenging thinking skills, often on a 4-point scale, aligned with the performance indicator and taxonomy.
- Show progression through a change in the cognitive demand of verbs at each proficiency level (see Example 1A) *or* in the depth and detail to which a student completes a task of similar cognitive demand (see Example 1B).

Avoid This

- Progressions that result solely in more or longer work products by applying the same skill repeatedly.
- Progressions that don’t describe *distinguished* work.
- 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).
- Writing criteria for the highest performance level in a way that equates to perfection or 100% accomplishment.
- Using assessments that limit any student’s opportunities to demonstrate the highest performance level.

Example 1A

Level: High School

Content Area: Math

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Use geometric shapes and their properties to model physical objects.	I can identify geometric shapes (e.g., triangles, quadrilaterals, and other polygons). can describe geometric shapes and their basic properties.	I can describe geometric shapes and their basic properties.	I can model physical objects using geometric shapes.	I can evaluate the quality of models representing physical objects.

Example 1B

Level: Elementary

Content Area: Cross Curricular (Problem Solving)

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Generate solutions to problems.	I can identify a possible solution to the problem.	I can identify a solution to the problem based on collected data.	I can generate a workable solution that addresses the given problem using collected data.	I can generate a variety of workable solutions to a problem using collected data.

Trait 2

Scoring criteria describe the quality of student work at each performance level.

Do This

- Use precise, specific language and objective descriptions of the evidence students produce at each proficiency level which can be more consistently evaluated by different individuals (see Example 2A).
- For *proficient* and *distinguished* descriptions, include all elements of the performance indicator (see Example 2B).
- Include specific, technical expectations (number of pages, number of sources, types of graphs, etc.) in a supplemental checklist or assignment requirements rather than in scoring criteria. Use these elements of an assignment to determine if it is complete or to inform habits of work assessments and feedback.

Avoid This

- Using the number (e.g., “I can include 3–5 [elements]”) or frequency (e.g. “rarely,” “sometimes,” or “always”) of an element of performance.
- Vague descriptors (e.g., poor, excellent, high-quality, visually appealing). These are difficult to evaluate consistently and don’t clarify expectations.

Example 2A

Level: Middle/High School

Content Area: World Language

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Language Control: Apply knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to communicate ideas.	I can use familiar words accurately in isolation .	I can use familiar language accurately in phrases .	I can select and use words, order words, and spell/pronounce words accurately in simple sentences on familiar topics .	I can select and use words, order words, and spell/pronounce words accurately in complex sentences on familiar and concrete topics .

Example 2B

Level: High School

Content Area: English Language Arts

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Organize writing in a way that is appropriate to purpose and audience.	I can include ideas in a piece of writing.	I can apply a formulaic progression of ideas related to a purpose .	I can develop a clear and coherent progression of ideas, using syntax and transitions appropriate to purpose and audience .	I can create a complex progression of ideas, using varied syntax and transitions to achieve my purpose and reach my audience .

Trait 3

Scoring criteria describe affirmatively what students can do at each level of performance.

Do This

- Write scoring criteria from the student’s point of view. Starting with “I can…” or “Students can…” helps to reinforce this idea (see Example 3A).
- Use positive, specific language and an asset-based approach that focuses on what students can do to foster continual improvement (see Example 3B).

Avoid This

- Deficit-based descriptions and framing or statements that articulate undesirable learning outcomes (e.g., “I cannot [do something]”).
- Negative language that may reinforce unhelpful mindsets and emphasize learning deficits (e.g., “weak use [of something]”).

Example 3A

Level: High School

Content Area: Health

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Evaluate a variety of behaviors to prevent or reduce health risks to self and others.	I can state a variety of behaviors to prevent or reduce health risks.	I can describe various behaviors and how they prevent or reduce health risks.	I can evaluate a variety of behaviors that prevent or reduce health risks.	I can evaluate a variety of behaviors that prevent or reduce health risks in relation to context.

Example 3B

Level: High School

Content Area: Transferable Skills (Creative & Practical Problem Solving)

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Observe and evaluate situations in order to define problems.	I can make observations about a situation.	I can identify variables and the relationships among them that influence a situation.	I can define a problem and identify constraints based on my observation and evaluation of the relationship between variables.	I can analyze a problem in order to determine its significance and relevance.

Trait 4

Scoring criteria are task neutral; they can be applied to a variety of learning experiences and products.

Do This

- Write scoring criteria for each performance indicator and use them to assess a variety of learning experiences or products (see Examples 4A and 4B).
- Create rubrics for any assessment or assignment by combining scoring criteria for the relevant performance indicators.

Avoid This

- 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.”)

Example 4A

Level: Middle School

Content Area: Social Studies

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Analyze regions of the Earth, their physical features, and political boundaries using a variety of geographic tools.	I can locate regions of the Earth, their physical features, and political boundaries.	I can describe regions of the Earth, their physical features, and political boundaries.	I can analyze regions of the Earth, their physical features, and political boundaries using a variety of geographic tools.	I can evaluate connections among the physical features, and political boundaries of regions of the Earth using a variety of geographic tools.

Example 4B

Level: Elementary

Content Area: Visual Art

Performance Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
Apply tools and techniques of specific art-making forms to create intended imagery.	I can use art-making tools.	I can use tools and techniques to create artistic products.	I can select tools and apply techniques to my artistic products to create imagery.	I can create imagery to convey a message through combining techniques in artistic products.