

RUBRICS: WHAT'S WRONG, WHAT'S BETTER

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WHAT'S A RUBRIC?

RUBRIC DEFINITION

- “A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work, or “what counts” (for example, purpose, organization, details, voice, and mechanics are often what count in a piece of writing); it also articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor.”
- **Understanding Rubrics** Heidi Goodrich Andrade
- <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/thinking/docs/rubricar.htm>

RUBRIC DEFINITION

- “A rubric is a guide for evaluating student work along certain dimensions... For each dimension there are concrete descriptors for different levels of performance. Essentially a rubric takes professional judgments about qualities of student work and aligns them with a rating scale.”
- http://www.lmu.edu/about/services/academicplanning/assessment/Assessment_Resources/Rubrics/What_is_a_rubric_.htm

EXAMPLES

Figure 1. Instructional Rubric for a Persuasive Essay

Criteria	Gradations of Quality			
	4	3	2	1
The claim	I make a claim and explain why it is controversial.	I make a claim but don't explain why it is controversial.	My claim is buried, confused, and/or unclear.	I don't say what my argument or claim is.
Reasons in support of the claim	I give clear and accurate reasons in support of my claim.	I give reasons in support of my claim, but I overlook important reasons.	I give 1 or 2 weak reasons that don't support my claim and/or irrelevant or confusing reasons.	I don't give reasons in support of my claim.
Reasons against the claim	I discuss the reasons against my claim and explain why it is valid anyway.	I discuss the reasons against my claim but neglect some or don't explain why the claim still stands.	I say that there are reasons against the claim, but I don't discuss them.	I don't acknowledge or discuss the reasons against my claim.
Organization	My writing has a compelling opening, an informative middle, and a satisfying conclusion.	My writing has a beginning, a middle, and an end.	My organization is rough but workable. I may sometimes get off topic.	My writing is aimless and disorganized.

Analytic Scoring Rubric for Subtask 2: Graphing (Evaluative criteria: accuracy, quality of title, and quality of axis and interval labels.)

Highly Proficient (3 points): Student has constructed a completely *accurate* task-prescribed graph (for example, bar, pie, or line graph), and the *title*, *axis*, and *interval labels* are all appropriate.

Proficient (2 points): Student has constructed an almost completely *accurate* task-prescribed graph (for example, bar, pie, or line graph), and the *title*, *axis*, and *interval labels* are almost all appropriate.

Not Yet Proficient (1 point): Student has *not accurately* constructed a task-prescribed graph (for example, bar, pie, or line graph), and fewer than half the *title*, *axis*, and *interval labels* are appropriate.

Source: Based on a rubric developed by Jeanne Miyasaka, WestED, 2221 E. Turquoise, Phoenix, AZ 85028.

**Reaction Paper
(10%)**

Name:

Paper #:

Sector:

Date Submitted:

Criteria	Points Possible	Points Awarded	Comments
Description of Sector/Case – Clarity	35		
Reaction - Clarity of Articulated Position and connection to sector/cases	35		
References & Citations – Relevance, Quality and Formatting	10		
Structure of paper/Grammar and Expression	20		
Total	100	0	

Creative Writing Example Rubric

For a printable copy of this rubric, please [click here](#)

Outcome	5	4	3	2	1
Students will write well organized, cohesive papers.	Work functions well as a whole. Piece has a clear flow and a sense of purpose.	Response has either a strong lead, developed body, or satisfying conclusion, but not all three.	Uneven. Awkward or missing transitions. Weakly unified.	Wanders. Repetitive. Inconclusive.	Incoherent and fragmentary. Student didn't write enough to judge.
Students will use appropriate voice and tone in writing.	Voice is confident and appropriate. Consistently engaging. Active, not passive voice. Natural. A strong sense of both authorship and audience.	The speaker sounds as if he or she cares too little or too much about the topic. Or the voice fades in and out. Occasionally passive.	Tone is okay. But the paper could have been written by anyone. Apathetic or artificial. Overly formal or informal.	"I just want to get this over with."	Mechanical and cognitive problems so basic that tone doesn't even figure in. Student didn't write enough to judge.
Students will demonstrate original, creative	Excellent use of imagery; similes; vivid, detailed descriptions; figurative language; puns; wordplay; metaphor; irony. Surprises the	Some startling images, a few stunning associative leaps with a weak conclusion or lesser, more ordinary images and comparisons	Sentimental, predictable, or cliché.	Borrows ideas or images from popular culture in an unreflective way.	Cursory response. Obvious lack of motivation and/or poor understanding of the assignment.

RUBRIC ELEMENTS

CRITERIA

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Students will demonstrate	Excellent use of imagery; similes; vivid, detailed descriptions; figurative language; puns; wordplay; metaphor; irony.	Some startling images, a few stunning associative leaps with a weak conclusion or lesser, more ordinary images	Sentimental, predictable, or cliché.	Borrows ideas or images from popular culture in an unreflective way.	Cursory response. Obvious lack of motivation and/or poor understanding of the assignment.

PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

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Students will demonstrate	Excellent use of imagery; similes; vivid, detailed descriptions; figurative language; puns; wordplay; metaphor; irony.	Some startling images, a few stunning associative leaps with a weak conclusion or lesser, more ordinary images	Sentimental, predictable, or cliché.	Borrows ideas or images from popular culture in an unreflective way.	Cursory response. Obvious lack of motivation and/or poor understanding of the assignment.

SCORING

Outcome	5	4	3	2	1
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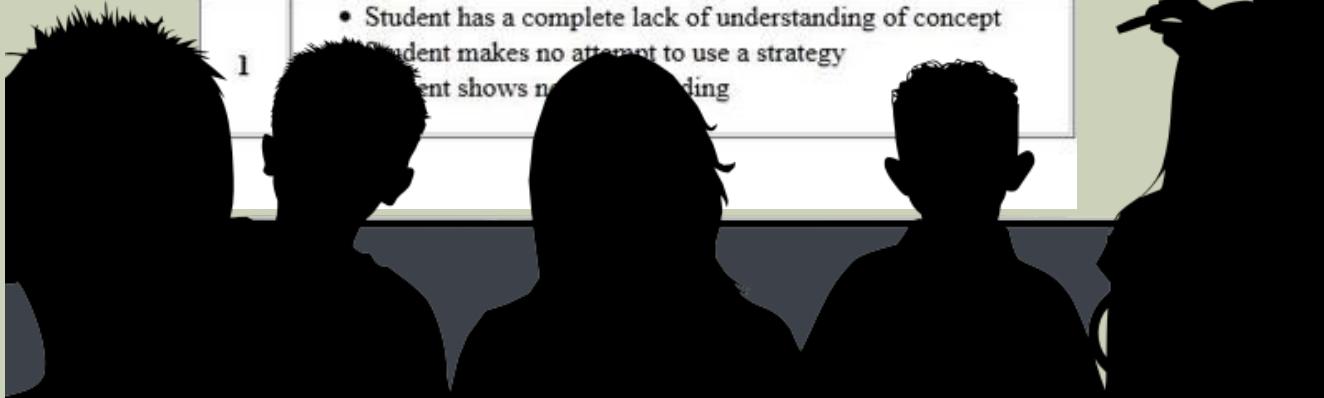
RUBRIC GOALS

- **Make evaluation**
 - fair and well-motivated
 - transparent to learners
 - consistent across learners, courses, instructors
- **Enable self and peer assessment**

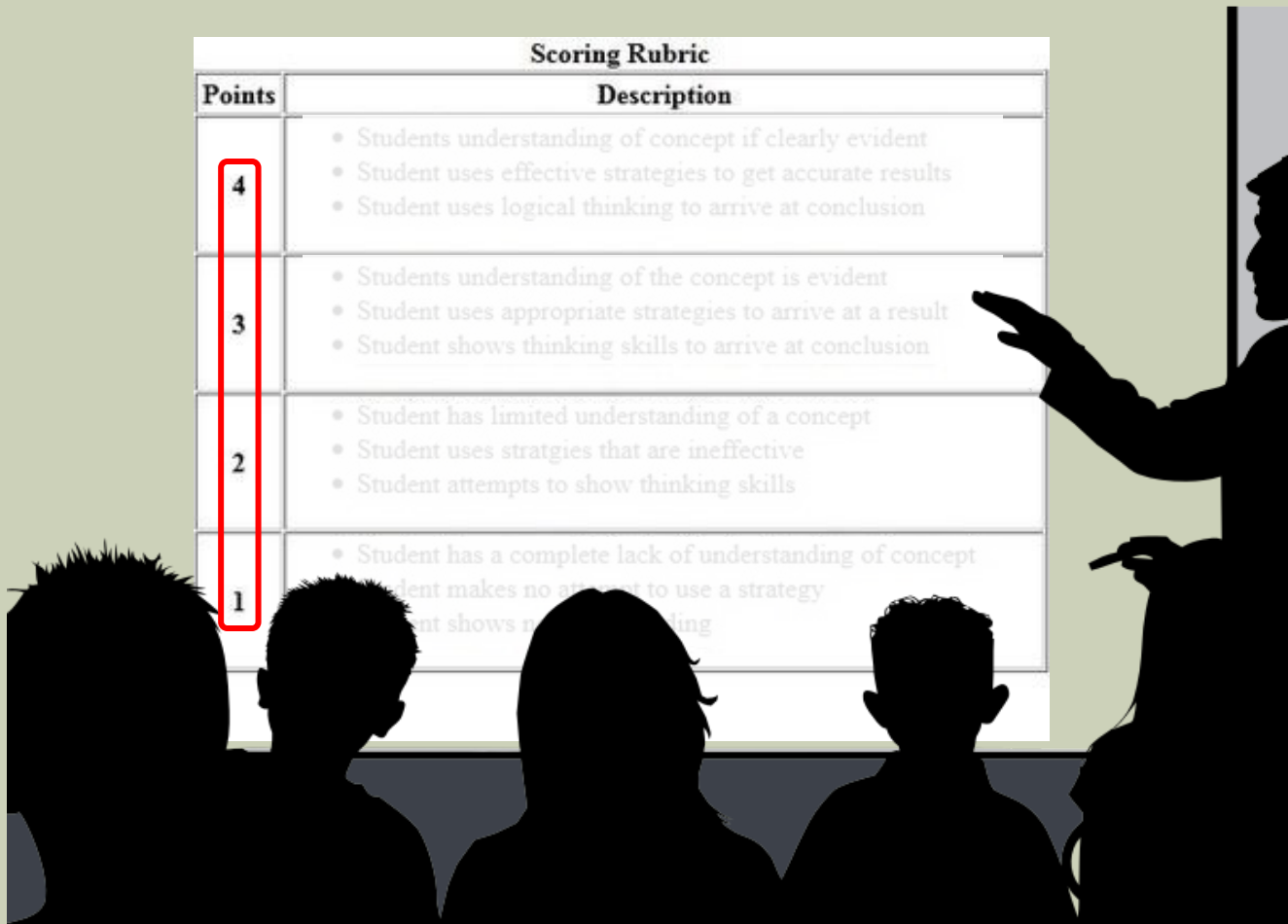
WHAT'S WRONG?

WHAT RUBRICS SAY

Points	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students understanding of concept is clearly evident• Student uses effective strategies to get accurate results• Student uses logical thinking to arrive at conclusion
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students understanding of the concept is evident• Student uses appropriate strategies to arrive at a result• Student shows thinking skills to arrive at conclusion
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student has limited understanding of a concept• Student uses strategies that are ineffective• Student attempts to show thinking skills
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student has a complete lack of understanding of concept• Student makes no attempt to use a strategy• Student shows no understanding



WHAT STUDENTS HEAR



Points	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students understanding of concept is clearly evident• Student uses effective strategies to get accurate results• Student uses logical thinking to arrive at conclusion
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students understanding of the concept is evident• Student uses appropriate strategies to arrive at a result• Student shows thinking skills to arrive at conclusion
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student has limited understanding of a concept• Student uses strategies that are ineffective• Student attempts to show thinking skills
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student has a complete lack of understanding of concept• Student makes no attempt to use a strategy• Student shows no thinking

PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

Outcome	5	4	3	2	1
Students will write well organized, cohesive papers.	Work functions well as a whole. Piece has a clear flow and a sense of purpose.	Response has either a strong lead, developed body, or satisfying conclusion, but not all three.	Uneven. Awkward or missing transitions.	Wanders. Repetitive. Inconclusive.	Incoherent and fragmentary. Student didn't write enough to
Students will use appropriate voice and tone in writing.	Voice is confident and appropriate. Consistently engaging. Active, not passive voice. Natural. A strong sense of both authorship and audience.	The speaker sounds as if he or she cares too little or too much about the topic. Or the voice fades in and out. Occasionally passive.	To... by... Ap... artificial. Overly formal or informal.		figure in. Student didn't write enough to judge.
Students will demonstrate	Excellent use of imagery; similes; vivid, detailed descriptions; figurative language; puns; wordplay; metaphor; irony.	Some startling images, a few stunning associative leaps with a weak conclusion or lesser, more ordinary images	Sentimental, predictable, or cliché.	Borrows ideas or images from popular culture in an unreflective way.	Cursory response. Obvious lack of motivation and/or poor understanding of the assignment.

A mix of unrelated and/or contradictory and/or subjective and/or ambiguous terms

SCORING

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Students will demonstrate	Excellent use of imagery; similes; vivid, detailed descriptions; figurative language; puns; wordplay; metaphor; irony.	Some startling images, a few stunning associative leaps with a weak conclusion or lesser, more ordinary images	Sentimental, predictable, or cliché.	Borrows ideas or images from popular culture in an unreflective way.	Cursory response. Obvious lack of motivation and/or poor understanding of the assignment.

Problematic boundaries between scores, difficult to decide but critically important to students

CRITERIA

Outcome	5	4	3	2	1
Students will write well organized, cohesive papers.	Work functions well as a piece. Piece has flow and sense of purpose.	Response has a clear focus and is unified.	Unorganized or disjointed.	Wanders. Repetitive. Inconclusive.	Incoherent and fragmentary. Student didn't write enough to judge.
Students will use appropriate voice and tone in writing.	Voice is consistent and appropriate. Consistently engaging. Active, not passive voice. Natural. A strong sense of both authorship and audience.	little or too much about the topic. Or the voice fades in and out. Occasionally passive.	Written by anyone. Apathetic or artificial. Overly formal or informal.	"I just want to get this over with."	Mechanical and cognitive problems so basic that tone doesn't even figure in. Student didn't write enough to judge.
Students will demonstrate creative use of language.	Excellent use of imagery; similes; vivid, detailed descriptions; figurative language; puns; wordplay; metaphor; irony.	Some startling images, a few stunning associative leaps with a weak conclusion or lesser, more ordinary images	Sentimental, predictable, or cliché.	Borrows ideas or images from popular culture in an unreflective way.	Cursory response. Obvious lack of motivation and/or poor understanding of the assignment.

Broad correlated dimensions, summed using ad hoc relative weights

WHAT PARTS WORK, WHAT DON'T

Working

- Performance descriptions
 - Let learners know what matters
- Specific critiques on learner work
 - Learner-centered contextualized application of legitimate performance criteria

Not Working

- Rubric tables
 - Jam unrelated even contradictory criteria into single cells
- Scores
 - Reduce distinct issues to a weighted sum of ill-defined numeric equivalents
 - Shift focus from feedback to point grubbing
 - Are problematic for teachers to give, even more so for peers

WHAT TO DO?

NO RUBRICS, JUST COMMENTS

- Dump the scores
- Dump the table
 - Dump the cells containing contradictory performance issues together
 - Dump the rows and columns
- Split broad rubrics into specific critiques
 - Separate critiques for separate issues, e.g., too much vs too little
- Grade progress, not submissions

ONE RUBRIC, MANY CRITIQUES

Rubric

<p>The speaker sounds as if he or she cares too little or too much about the topic. Or the voice fades in and out. Occasionally passive.</p>
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Critiques

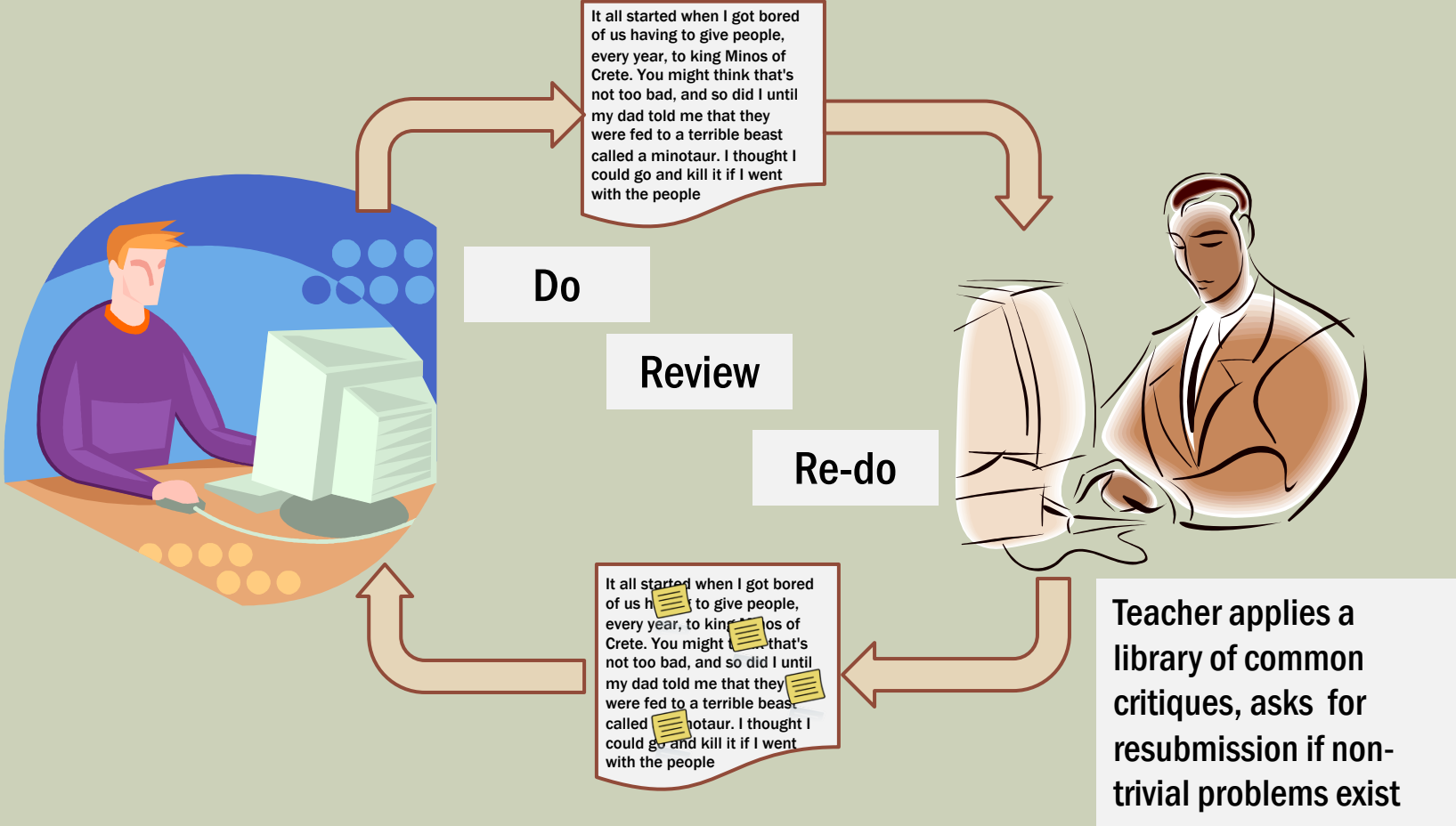
You appear disinterested. If this problem is as important as you claim, emphasize the impact.

Your passion is clear, but your case would be strong with more time spent on the evidence.

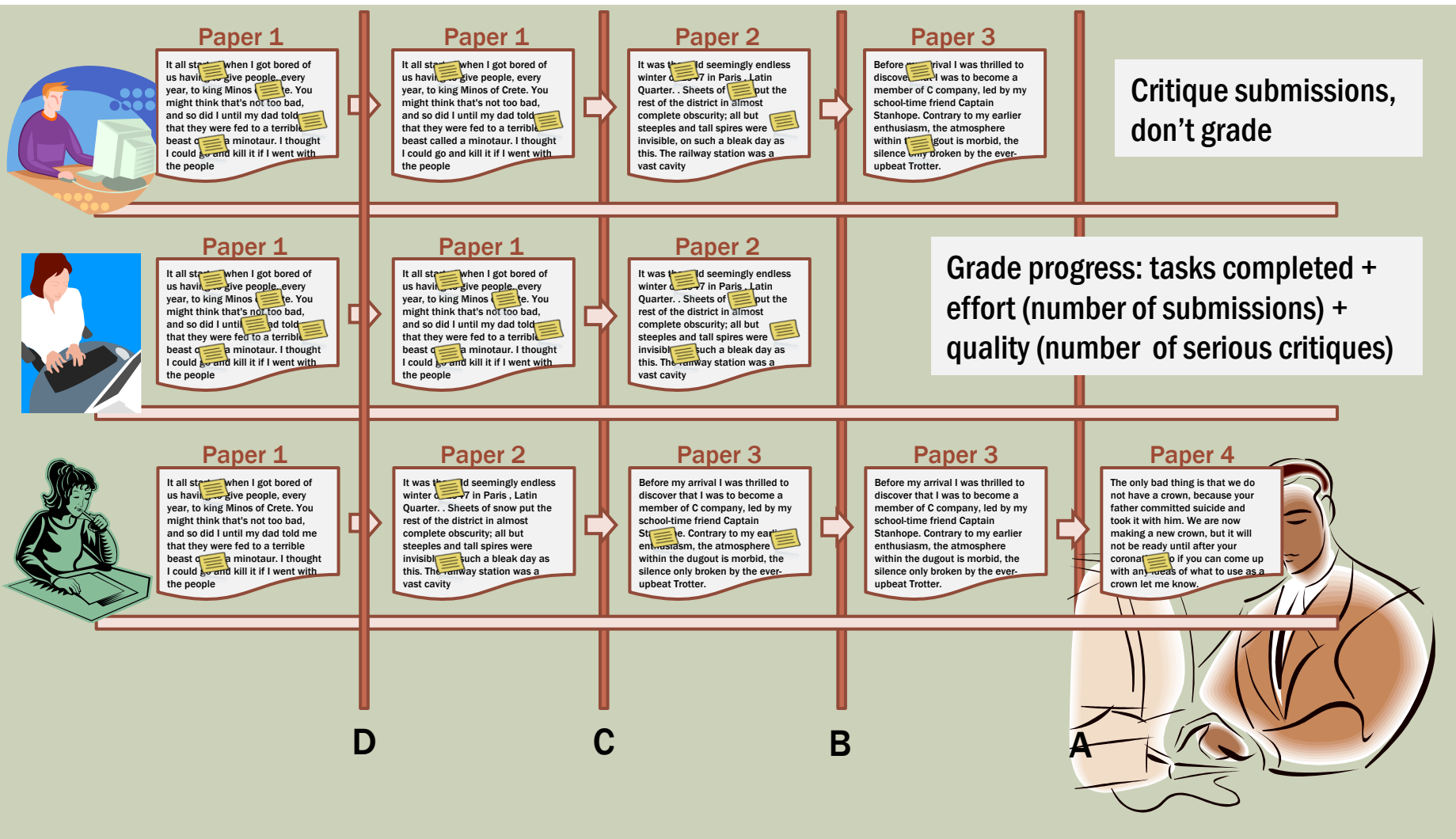
Try short direct active sentences. They are more convincing than dry passive ones.

THE CRITIQUING MODEL

CRITIQUING



GRADING



RUBRICS VS CRITIQUES

Rubrics	Critiques
Performance descriptions are combinations of contradictory ambiguously defined issues	Critiques are specific, separate, and consistent
Reviewer must make repeated borderline judgment calls, combined with a simple weighted sum	Reviewer decide if submission needs re-work
Final grade based on weighted average of the subjective submission scores	Final grade based on visible objective metrics: number of tasks done, submissions sent, and history of critiques
Criteria, performance descriptions, and scoring must be fully defined and published in advance	Criteria and progress metrics must be defined and published in advance but specific critiques can be added and refined over time
New instructors must learn how to interpret criteria such as “a strong sense of both authorship and audience”	New instructors can review in-context examples of critiques given for multiple submissions for each task