

How to Weight Rubrics

(Part four)



What is a weighted rubric?

- A weighted rubric is an analytic rubric in which certain concepts are judged more heavily than others. If, in a creative writing assignment, a teacher stresses character development, he or she might consider weighing the characters part of the rubric more heavily than the plot or setting.
- Remember that the purpose of creative writing is to evoke emotion from the reader. The writing needs to be interesting, sad, exciting, mysterious, or whatever the author decides. One way to develop the intended emotion is to focus on each concept separately within the context of creative writing.

Advantages

A weighted rubric **clearly communicates** to the students which parts of the project are more important to learn for a particular activity. Weights can be changed to stress different aspects of a project. One week a teacher may focus on character development. In the next week or two, plot may take precedence.

A weighted rubric **focuses** attention on specific aspects of a project. When learning something new, it is difficult to assimilate all of the necessary details into a coherent final product. Likewise, it is difficult to learn new things in isolation or out of context. A weighted rubric devised from quality projects will allow new learners to focus on what is being taught, while providing meaningful context to support the entire experience.

Different ways to weight rubrics

1. Refer to the [analytic rubric](#) in part two of this series. If you have just focused on character development, simply require students to achieve a passing score of 3.00 in *characters*, realizing that the other parts are also necessary for quality fiction writing.
2. Assign numeric weights to different concepts. *Characters* might be worth 50 percent, and the *setting* and *plot* might be worth 25 percent each. When grading a story, the teacher would put twice as much weight on *characters* as either *setting* or *plot*. A passing score of at least 2.00 points with 1.50 coming from *characters* would be required. After a lesson on how to develop the *plot*, that concept might be worth 50 percent while the *setting* and *characters* would be worth 25 percent each.
3. To achieve a cumulative effect after the second lesson, the *plot* and *characters* might be worth 40 percent each, and the *setting* might be worth 20 percent.

Summary

Weighted rubrics are useful for explicitly describing to students what concepts take priority over others for certain activities. In designing weighted rubrics, it is important not to lose sight of the purpose of an activity by getting bogged down in meaningless details, such as the number of adjectives and verbs used or the number of pages written.

The purpose of creative writing is to evoke a response from the reader. Using written words to elicit emotion effectively requires skill and understanding of the language. The concepts are the form by which good writing is judged. The important criteria become how the author uses language to achieve his or her goals.

Weighted fiction-writing content rubric sample:

Criteria	4	3	2	1
<p>PLOT: "What" and "Why"</p> <p>25%</p>	<p>Both <i>plot</i> parts are fully developed.</p> <p>.25 x 4 = 1.00 point</p>	<p>One of the <i>plot</i> parts is fully developed and the less developed part is at least addressed.</p> <p>.25 x 3 = .75 point</p>	<p>Both <i>plot</i> parts are addressed but not fully developed.</p> <p>.25 x 2 = .50 point</p>	<p>Neither <i>plot</i> parts are fully developed.</p> <p>.25 x 1 = .25 point</p>
<p>SETTING: "When" and "Where"</p> <p>25%</p>	<p>Both <i>setting</i> parts are fully developed.</p> <p>.25 x 4 = 1.00 point</p>	<p>One of the <i>setting</i> parts is fully developed and the less developed part is at least addressed.</p> <p>.25 x 3 = .75 point</p>	<p>Both <i>setting</i> parts of the story are addressed but not fully developed.</p> <p>.25 x 2 = .50 point</p>	<p>Neither <i>setting</i> parts are developed.</p> <p>.25 x 1 = .25 point</p>
<p>CHARACTERS: "Who" described by appearance, personality, character traits, and behavior.</p> <p>50%</p>	<p>The main <i>characters</i> are fully developed with much descriptive detail. The reader has a vivid image of the characters.</p> <p>.50 x 4 = 2.00 points</p>	<p>The main <i>characters</i> are developed with some descriptive detail. The reader has a vague idea of the characters.</p> <p>.50 x 3 = 1.50 points</p>	<p>The main <i>characters</i> are identified by name only.</p> <p>.50 x 2 = 1.00 point</p>	<p>None of the <i>characters</i> are developed or named.</p> <p>.50 x 1 = .50 point</p>