SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

How to Use Single-Point Formative Rubrics

Formative Rubrics

Formative rubrics are instructional tools designed to support student learning throughout the writing process. Unlike summative rubrics, which often evaluate and score final products, formative rubrics help students understand expectations, monitor their process, and make meaningful revisions before completing a writing task. Formative rubrics also provide teachers a focused framework for delivering timely, actionable feedback that promotes growth and improvement.

Role of Formative Rubrics

The following table outlines the role and benefits of formative rubrics as part of writing instruction.

Role of the Rubric	Description	Benefits to Students
Clarifies Expectations	Clearly communicates the criteria for successful writing before and during the drafting process.	Reduces uncertainty by helping students understand what high-quality writing looks like and what is expected of them.
Supports Revision	Serves as a formative tool that guides feedback and reflection throughout the writing process rather than solely evaluating the final product.	Enables students to identify areas for improvement, respond to feedback, and strengthen their writing through revision.
Provides Instructional Scaffolding	Allows teachers to focus on specific writing skills or elements at strategic points in instruction.	Prevents students from becoming overwhelmed by extensive feedback and helps them focus on achievable goals.
Promotes Self-Assessment and Peer Review	Functions as a shared framework for evaluating drafts and discussing writing quality.	Develops critical thinking, encourages reflection, and fosters ownership of the writing process.
Encourages Student Growth	Emphasizes progress and improvement instead of simply assigning a grade.	Helps students recognize their own strengths and identify next steps for learning.
Guides and Strengthens Feedback Conversations	Creates a common language for teachers and students to discuss writing.	Makes feedback more specific, actionable, and meaningful, leading to improved writing outcomes.

How to Use a Formative Single-Point Rubric

A single-point rubric is a formative tool designed to guide students through the writing process. The criteria in the left column describe the expectations for grade-level writing. Teachers and students use additional columns to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The purpose of a single-point rubric

is to support learning by making expectations clear, providing focused feedback, and guiding students toward stronger writing through reflection and revision.

Before Writing

1. Select which criteria are your focus for feedback.
2. Review the selected criteria with students before they begin writing.
3. Discuss what each of the selected criterion means.
4. Use the criteria to establish clear expectations for the writing task.

During Writing

1. Record evidence of successful writing in the *Strengths* column.
2. Provide specific actionable feedback to students in the *Feedback for Improvement* column.
3. Focus the feedback on Higher-Order Concerns (HOCs) before addressing Lower-Order Concerns (LOCs). Examples of HOCs and LOCs are in the informative rubric documents.
4. Use feedback to help students understand what to do next, not just what is wrong.

Revising and Editing

1. Ask students to review the feedback and identify revision goals.
2. Prioritize revisions that address Higher-Order Concerns (HOCs) before correcting conventions.
3. Encourage students to make changes directly connected to the rubric criteria.

Self-Assessment and Peer Review

1. Create and practice peer review protocols.
2. Have students use the rubric to evaluate their own writing. They should focus only on the criteria identified before the writing assignment.
3. Using established protocols, encourage peers to identify at least one strength and one suggestion for improvement for each selected criterion.
4. Use the rubric language consistently during conferences and discussions about writing.

How Formative Single-Point Rubrics Support Teachers

1. Single-Point rubrics help teachers **provide targeted feedback**. Instead of commenting on every aspect of a student's writing, teachers can focus on one or two priority skills, such as organization, evidence, transitions, or elaboration. This makes feedback more manageable and more effective.
2. Single-Point rubrics help teachers tailor **instructional next steps**. Single-point rubrics allow teachers to tailor feedback to individual student needs. Two students may receive feedback on entirely different criteria based on their strengths and areas for growth.
3. Single-Point rubrics help teachers **prioritize instruction using tiers of concern**. The rubric helps teachers address higher-order concerns first, such as ideas, claim, and organization, before

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focusing on lower-order concerns like spelling and punctuation. This ensures that time is spent on the aspects of writing that have the greatest impact on communication and overall quality.

4. Single-Point rubrics **reduce student overwhelm**. Because teachers can target only the most important revision goals, students receive focused feedback instead of a lengthy list of corrections. This makes revision more purposeful and achievable.
5. Single-Point rubrics **support formative assessment and revision**. Unlike holistic scoring rubrics used for summative assessment, single-point rubrics allow teachers to identify strengths and provide targeted feedback for targeted areas. Teachers can also use the single-point rubrics to identify next steps and guide students through the revision process.
6. Single-Point rubrics **increase instructional flexibility**. Teachers can use only the criteria that align with the current instructional focus. For example, a teacher may focus solely on use of evidence during a particular lesson.
7. Single-point rubrics **promote consistency in writing instruction**. The rubrics provide common expectations and language for discussing writing quality, helping teachers align feedback and collaborate around student writing.

Practical Classroom Examples

1. **Focus on one Criterion**

- Instructional Focus: transitional words and phrases
- Instead of assessing the entire piece, the teacher selects only the "Transitional Words and Phrases" criterion from the rubric.
- Student Excerpt
- Dogs make great pets. They are friendly. They can also protect your home.
- Teacher Feedback
- Feedback: "How can you show the relationship between these ideas? Try adding words such as *also*, *for example*, or *because*."
- Strength: "You grouped your reasons together logically."

Students revise only the use of transitions before moving on to another writing skill.

2. **Writing Conferences**

- Instructional Focus: individualized feedback
- Student Goal
    - Supporting Evidence
- Teacher Discussion
    - "Let's look at your evidence. You have one reason for your opinion. Where could you add another example to strengthen your argument?"

The rubric becomes the structure for the conference and helps the teacher and student focus on specific next steps.

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3. **Small-Group Instruction**

- Instructional Focus: Elaboration
- After reviewing student drafts, the teacher notices that several students struggle with explaining their evidence.
- Teacher Actions
    - Pull a small group.
    - Use the "Elaboration of Ideas" criterion.
    - Model how to explain why evidence matters.

Rather than reteaching the entire process, the teacher provides focused instruction on one skill identified through the rubric.

4. **Exit Ticket for Revision Planning**

- Instructional Focus: Student Self-Assessment
- At the end of the writing lesson, students review one rubric criterion and answer:
    - What is one strength of my writing?
    - What is one area I will revise tomorrow?

  Students use the rubric language to set revision goals and become more aware of their own writing decisions.

5. **Whole-Class Mini-Lesson from Rubric Data**

- Instructional Focus: Thesis Statements
- After reviewing drafts, the teacher notices that many students need support with thesis statements.
- Teacher Actions
    - Conduct a 10-minute mini-lesson on writing stronger thesis statements.
    - Provide time for students to immediately revise their own thesis statements.
    - Reassess only that criterion.

This allows the rubric to drive instruction rather than simply measure performance.

Key Takeaways for Teachers

A single-point rubric is most effective when it functions as an instructional tool rather than a grading tool. Teachers use a single-point rubric to:

- Identify one or two high-impact revision goals,
- Provide targeted feedback,
- Individualize instruction,
- Guide conferences and small groups,
- Prioritize higher-order concerns, and
- Help students monitor their own growth as writers.

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Links to Single-Point Formative Rubrics

Listed below are the links to the new formative single-point informative rubrics and the updated formative single-point argumentative rubrics. The previous versions of the argumentative rubrics are linked inside the updated rubric documents. Narrative single-point rubrics will be added as they become available.

Rubric	Description
Informative Single-Point Rubrics K-2	This document includes defined informative writing elements for K-2, sentence frames for academic writing, and a single-point rubric for each grade level.
Informative Single-Point Rubrics 3-5	This document includes defined informative writing elements for 3-5, types of informative writing, information on creating informative writing tasks, sentence frames for academic writing, and a single-point rubric for each grade level.
Informative Single-Point Rubrics 6-8	This document includes defined informative writing elements for 3-5, types of informative writing, information on creating informative writing tasks, sentence frames for academic writing, a 6th-grade rubric, and a shared rubric for 7th and 8th grades.
Informative Single-Point Rubrics English 1-4	This document includes defined informative writing elements for English 1-4, types of informative writing, information on creating informative writing tasks, sentence frames for academic writing, an English 1-4 informative rubric, elements of literary analysis for English 1-4, sentence frames, and a single-point rubric for literary analysis.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics Kindergarten	This document includes defined argumentative writing elements for Kindergarten, opinion writing instructional support, feedback starters and conference questions, and a single-point rubric for opinion writing.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics 1st Grade	This document includes defined argumentative writing elements for 1st grade, opinion writing instructional support, feedback starters and conference questions, and a single-point rubric for opinion writing.

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Rubric	Description
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics 2nd Grade	This document includes defined argumentative writing elements for 2nd grade, tiers of concerns, feedback starters and conference questions, and a single-point rubric for opinion writing.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics 3rd Grade	This document includes defined argumentative writing elements for 3rd grade, tiers of concerns, guidance for first draft feedback, feedback starters and suggestions, and a single-point rubric for opinion writing.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics 4th Grade	This document includes defined argumentative writing elements for 4th grade, tiers of concerns, first draft feedback, feedback starters and suggestions, opinion prompt starters, and a single-point rubric for opinion writing.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics 5th Grade	This document includes defined argumentative writing elements for 5th grade, tiers of concerns, feedback starters and suggestions, guidance for writing strong argumentative prompts, support moving students from opinion to claim, sample claim frames, and a single-point rubric for argumentative writing.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics 7-8	This document includes defined argumentative writing elements for 6th and 7th grades, tiers of concerns, feedback starters and suggestions, guidance for writing strong argumentative prompts, a single-point argumentative rubric for 7th grade, and a single-point argumentative rubric for 8th grade.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics 8th and English 1	This document includes defined argumentative elements for 8th grade and English 1, tiers of concerns, feedback starters and suggestions, guidance for writing strong argumentative prompts, and a single-point argumentative rubric for 8th grade and English 1.
Updated Argumentative Single-Point Rubrics English 2-4	This document includes defined argumentative elements for English 2-4, feedback starters and suggestions, guidance for writing strong argumentative prompts, and a single-point argumentative rubric for English 2-4.

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