

Self-Assessment Rubrics for Adult Soft Skills Training

The world of work is shifting faster than ever. As technology and automation continue to reshape industries, the ability to adapt, collaborate, and think creatively has become more important than ever. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average worker now holds more than 12 different jobs before the age of 50. That kind of career mobility demands flexibility, problem-solving, and the kind of soft skills that make people indispensable in a workplace that's always evolving.

Explicitly Teaching Soft Skills

Teachers must focus on teaching and assessing essential soft skills in their classrooms. We have identified the skills we believe are most valuable—time management, communication, collaboration, creative problem-solving, and flexibility. Then we created rubrics to help students understand what these skills look like in action and where they can grow. These rubrics aren't just about evaluation; they're tools to help students reflect, set goals, and see their progress over time.

If you use a project-based program, these skills are as essential as academic knowledge. Tackling large-scale projects, working with diverse team members, and overcoming challenges require students to think and act beyond content mastery. That's why many project-based teachers use these rubrics (for themselves) to give students specific, actionable feedback that supports their success—not just in school, but in life.

Designing Rubrics to Assess Soft Skills

Below, you'll find some of the rubrics we designed to guide this work.

Collaboration + Contributions in a Team Dynamic
Asset-Based Rubric

1 Beginning	2 Developing	3 Proficient	4 Mastery
<p>Begins to observe team dynamics and is starting to understand the importance of listening and contributing.</p> <p>Demonstrates an awareness of areas for growth, such as staying focused during discussions and exploring roles within the team.</p> <p>Can build on strengths by practicing active listening and experimenting with using available resources to support the team.</p>	<p>Shows effort to listen and support team members, with moments of active engagement.</p> <p>Demonstrates growing ability to remain focused and respond respectfully during discussions.</p> <p>Emerging flexibility in trying different roles within the team.</p> <p>Strengths include contributing occasional feedback and beginning to use resources.</p> <p>Can further develop by consistently applying these skills and staying patient with the process.</p>	<p>Actively listens and supports team members with consistent contributions.</p> <p>Demonstrates respect and offers constructive feedback during group tasks.</p> <p>Flexible in moving between roles and making use of team resources. Strengths include engagement in discussions and collaboration.</p> <p>Can continue to grow by refining body language to reflect engagement and managing occasional frustrations with patience.</p>	<p>Excels in collaboration by actively listening, sharing ideas, and supporting the team's goals.</p> <p>Consistently demonstrates positive body language, offers thoughtful feedback, and ensures balance in roles.</p> <p>Strengths include clear communication, patience, and effective use of resources to achieve group objectives.</p> <p>Serves as a role model for teamwork and encourages others to engage and contribute.</p>

The Benefits of Assets-Based Rubrics

Shifting to asset-based rubrics changes the conversation about learning. Instead of focusing on what participants can't do, these rubrics highlight their strengths and help them see where they're growing. This subtle shift has a big impact, especially when participants use these tools for self-assessment. By emphasizing what participants are doing well, we encourage them to reflect on their progress, set goals, and approach their learning with confidence. They're no longer stuck in a mindset of "I'm bad at this," but instead, they can think, "Here's where I'm doing well, and here's my next step." It's about moving forward, not getting stuck in what they lack.

When we frame rubrics this way, we're fostering a growth mindset. Participants see themselves as capable and developing, which makes self-assessment less intimidating and more empowering. They're able to take ownership of their learning because they can identify their strengths and use them as a foundation to keep improving. This is so important when it comes to skills like collaboration, communication, and problem-solving—skills that aren't fixed but evolve with practice.

Asset-based rubrics also help reduce the shame or defensiveness that can come with traditional deficit-based feedback. When feedback feels like a judgment, participants naturally shut down or become resistant. But when we highlight what's working,

participants feel supported and safe to acknowledge areas for growth. This makes the feedback process collaborative rather than punitive, helping participants stay engaged and motivated to improve.

Another benefit is how these rubrics align with inclusive practices. Every participant brings different strengths to the table, and growth doesn't look the same for everyone. Asset-based rubrics honor that variability. They celebrate what each participant contributes, no matter where they're starting from. This approach helps create a classroom culture where progress is the goal and everyone feels valued.

Ultimately, asset-based rubrics are about modeling the kind of feedback we want participants to give and receive—not just in school, but in life. They encourage participants to focus on growth and improvement rather than perfection, which supports both academic development and social-emotional learning. When participants feel empowered to see their potential and build on it, they develop confidence, resilience, and self-awareness—skills they'll carry with them well beyond the walls of the classroom.

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