A grading rubric for elementary students: points or not?

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Should a grading rubric for elementary students carry points? How Peabody's free rubrics handle it: no points in K–2, points from 3rd grade.

A grading rubric for elementary students doesn't have to carry points. On Peabody Teach's free premade rubrics, the K–2 band has three levels, Wow!, Yes and Not yet, and no points by default; grades 3–5 and 6–8 have four levels worth 4, 3, 2 and 1 points, with one row that counts twice. In the rubric maker, points are one checkbox: on for a score, off for feedback only. No sign-in, no ads, and Peabody is free through the end of 2026.

This post is about our own tools, and what it says about them comes from their code as of 30 October 2026. The rest is a teacher's way of thinking it through, not a rule.

The question behind the question

"Should my rubric have points?" usually means "What will I do with the number?" If the number goes in a grade book, the rubric needs points that add up in a way you can explain to a family. If the number goes nowhere, points can get in the way: a child who sees "2" may stop reading the words beside it.

How Peabody's rubrics decide

- Grade band: K–2 · Levels: Wow! / Yes / Not yet · Points by default: None · Weights: None
- Grade band: 3–5 · Levels: Exceeds / Meets / Approaching / Beginning · Points by default: 4 / 3 / 2 / 1 · Weights: One row counts twice
- Grade band: 6–8 · Levels: Exceeds / Meets / Approaching / Beginning · Points by default: 4 / 3 / 2 / 1 · Weights: One row counts twice

The K–2 choice is written into the rubrics' own rules: three levels, no points by default, and cells short enough to read to a child. The levels still have values under the hood, 3, 2 and 1, so if your school wants a number for a first grader you can tick "Score column and total" in the maker and the points appear.

When points help

- Report cards that ask for a number. A rubric with a total turns a project into one score you can defend, row by row.
- Weighting what matters. In the maker, any row can count ×1, ×2 or ×3. If the assignment is about the argument, double the claim. The maker shows each row's maximum and the

total above the grid.

- Older students who want to know where they stand. Grades 3 and up can read "17 out of 20" and see which row cost them.

A worked example: a 3–5 rubric with four rows on the 4-point scale, where one row counts twice, tops out at 4 + 4 + 4 + 8 = 20 points. A student who earns Meets on every row scores 3 + 3 + 3 + 6 = 15.

When points get in the way

- Kindergarten to second grade. Young children read "Not yet" as a next step more easily than a 1.
- Drafts. A score on a draft can end the conversation. A single point rubric keeps it going.
- Peer review. Classmates are better at noticing than at scoring. Have them circle words, not numbers.

A word about percentages

If you turn a rubric score into a percentage, look at it before it goes in the grade book. On a 4-point scale, "Meets" on every row is 75 percent. Whether that matches what "meets the goal" means in your grade book is your school's call, not the rubric's. Some teachers convert the levels with their own table instead of dividing.

How to set points in the maker

1. Open teach.peabody.kids/make/rubric, or open a premade rubric there with "Open in the maker".
2. Tick or untick Score column and total. With it on, every row shows its maximum and the sheet shows a total line.
3. Change any level's points (0 to 100) in the box under its name.
4. Set a row's weight with its "counts" menu: ×1, ×2 or ×3.
5. For young students, press K–2 levels: Wow! / Yes / Not yet. It sets three levels and turns points off in one click.

Then print, or copy the table into Google Docs or Word. Nothing you type is sent to our server.

What it doesn't do

- No grade book. The maker doesn't store scores or students. You circle on paper or type in your own copy.
- No percentages on the sheet. The maker shows the maximum and leaves the arithmetic to you.
- No standards codes. Add your own in a cell if you need them.

There are five worked writing rubrics in writing rubrics for elementary students, and a full

example in three bands in an analytic rubric for elementary. Peabody is also a free reading site for kids: the stories your students can read at home are in the library.

Questions

Should an elementary rubric have points?

It depends on what you'll do with the score. For grades K–2, Peabody's rubrics use three worded levels with no points by default. From 3rd grade they use a 4-point scale with one row that counts twice, so the total can go in a grade book.

What is a good grading scale for an elementary rubric?

Four levels, Exceeds, Meets, Approaching and Beginning, worth 4 to 1 points, is a familiar scale and the one Peabody's 3–5 and 6–8 rubrics use. For K–2, three levels in plain words, Wow!, Yes and Not yet, are easier for a young child to follow.

Can I add or remove points on a free rubric?

Yes. In Peabody Teach's rubric maker, "Score column and total" turns points on or off, each level's points can be changed, and each row can count once, twice or three times. It is free through the end of 2026, with no sign-in.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/grading-rubric-for-elementary-students