

Physics Problem Solving Rubric

This rubric is to be used with Mr. Gorman's Physics Answer Sheet. It is based on research done at the University of Minnesota by Jennifer Docktor.

	5	4	3	2	1	0
Useful Description	The description is useful, appropriate and complete.	The description is useful but contains minor omissions or errors.	Parts of the description are not useful, missing, and/or contain errors.	Most of the description is not useful, missing, and/or contains errors.	The entire description is not useful and/or contains errors.	The solution does not include a description.
Physics Approach	The physics approach is appropriate and complete.	The physics approach contains minor omissions or errors.	Some concepts and principles of the physics approach are missing and/or inappropriate.	Most physics approach is missing and/or inappropriate.	All of the chosen concepts and principles are inappropriate.	The solution does not indicate an approach.
Specific Application of Physics	The specific application of physics is appropriate and complete.	The specific application of physics contains minor omissions or errors.	Parts of the specific application of physics are missing and/or contain errors.	Most of the specific application of physics is missing and/or contains errors.	The entire specific application of physics is inappropriate and/or contains errors.	The solution does not indicate an application of physics.
Mathematical Procedures	The mathematical procedures are appropriate and complete.	Appropriate mathematical procedures are used with minor omissions or errors.	Parts of the mathematical procedures are missing and/or contain errors.	Most of the mathematical procedures are missing and/or contain errors.	All mathematical procedures are inappropriate and/or contain errors.	There is no evidence of mathematical procedures.
Logical Progression	The entire problem solution is clear, focused, and logically connected.	The solution is clear and focused with minor inconsistencies.	Parts of the solution are unclear, unfocused, and/or inconsistent.	Most of the solution parts are unclear, unfocused, and/or inconsistent.	The entire solution is unclear, unfocused, and/or inconsistent.	There is no evidence of a logical progression.

Category Descriptions:

Useful Description assesses a solver's skill at organizing information from the problem statement into an appropriate and useful representation that summarizes essential information symbolically and visually. The description is considered "useful" if it guides further steps in the solution process. A problem description could include restating known and unknown information, assigning appropriate symbols for quantities, stating a goal or target quantity, a visualization (sketch or picture), stating qualitative expectations, an abstracted physics diagram (force, energy, motion, momentum, ray, etc.), drawing a graph, stating a coordinate system, and choosing a system.

Physics Approach assesses a solver's skill at selecting appropriate physics concepts and principle(s) to use in solving the problem. Here the term concept is defined to be a general physics idea, such as the basic concept of "vector" or specific concepts of "momentum" and "average velocity". The term principle is defined to be a fundamental physics rule or law used to describe objects and their interactions, such as the law of conservation of energy, Newton's second law, or Ohm's law.

Specific Application of Physics assesses a solver's skill at applying the physics concepts and principles from their selected approach to the specific conditions in the problem. If necessary, the solver has set up specific equations for the problem that are consistent with the chosen approach. A specific application of physics could include a statement of definitions, relationships between the defined quantities, initial conditions, and assumptions or constraints in the problem (i.e., friction negligible, massless spring, massless pulley, inextensible string, etc.).

Mathematical Procedures assesses a solver's skill at following appropriate and correct mathematical rules and procedures during the solution execution. The term mathematical procedures refers to techniques that are employed to solve for target quantities from specific equations of physics, such as isolate and reduce strategies from algebra, substitution, use of the quadratic formula, or matrix operations. The term mathematical rules refers to conventions from mathematics, such as appropriate use of parentheses, square roots, and trigonometric identities. If the course instructor or researcher using the rubric expects a symbolic answer prior to numerical calculations, this could be considered an appropriate mathematical procedure.

Logical Progression assesses the solver's skills at communicating reasoning, staying focused toward a goal, and evaluating the solution for consistency (implicitly or explicitly). It checks whether the entire problem solution is clear, focused, and organized logically. The term logical means that the solution is coherent (the solution order and solver's reasoning can be understood from what is written), internally consistent (parts do not contradict), and externally consistent (agrees with physics expectations).