

**Table 1: Criteria used to compare letters, numbers, symbols and words to communicate levels of evidence and strength of recommendations**

Criterion	Question
Ease of comprehension	Is the meaning likely to be understood intuitively?
Associations	Are there associations with other grading systems that may be helpful or problematic?
Succinctness	Is the presentation concise?
Literacy	Is the presentation likely to be easily understood by people with different literacy levels?
Language	Is the presentation likely to be easily understood by people speaking different languages?
Culture	Is the presentation likely to be easily understood across different cultures?
Verbalization	Is the presentation likely to be easily communicated verbally?
Clear number of levels	Is it clear how many categories there are?
Clear direction	Is it clear which grade means best and which means worst?
Clear limits	Are the lower and upper limits intuitively clear?
Conveys 2 dimensions	Can 2 dimensions be represented easily?

**Table 2: Potential problems with letters, numbers, symbols and words**

Criterion*	Letters	Numbers	Symbols	Words
Ease of comprehension	No problem	No problem	Depends on the symbol	Depends on the choice and number of words
Associations	May be misleading due to associations with grading systems used in schools	May suggest that judgments are more quantitative than they are	Depends on the choice of symbols	Depends on the choice of words
Succinct	No problem	No problem	No problem	May be less succinct
Literacy	No problem	No problem	No problem	May be a problem
Language	May be a problem	No problem	No problem	May be a problem with translation
Verbalization	May be a problem as there is no universal alphabet	No problem	May be a problem	No problem
Culture	Letters may be interpreted differently in different cultures	No problem	Symbols may have different meanings in different cultures	No problem
Number of levels clear	Not clear	Not clear	Depends on the symbol	Depends on the choice of words
Direction clear	Probably generally understood that A is best	May sometimes be confusion whether higher is better or worse	Depends on the symbol	No problem
Limits clear	Upper limit clear; lower limit may not be clear	May not be clear	Depends on the symbol	May depend on the choice of words
Conveys 2 dimensions	May be a problem	May be a problem	Depends on the symbol	Possible to use different words for different dimensions

\*See Table 1.