

# MAKING FEEDBACK WORK FOR YOU

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## What is Feedback?

Firstly, let's take a close look at what giving feedback entails. Currently research gives us specific definitions about what feedback is:

- The **return of information about the result** of a process or activity.
- **Information about past behaviour** delivered in the present which may influence future behaviour.
- **Peer feedback is the evaluation of your work by people who are at a similar level** or at a similar stage of their studies.

## Why is Feedback Important?

It is the responsibility of the educator to help you develop as a student. The advice should be trusted and taken on board. **As a student you should be committed to improving and learning from your mistakes.** Peer feedback is where one student can offer guidance or mentor the other. This **can be invaluable to not only the person receiving the feedback but also to the person giving the feedback.**

**Essentially, feedback is the intent to support or help improve your performance and it should be implemented in your work. Treating feedback like a gift** from another person will soon help you to recognise other benefits of feedback and there are many benefits.

### TOP TIP

Remember someone gave their time to give you feedback and their intent is to help you to improve.



# Different Types of Feedback

## Corrective Feedback

**This helps you to revise your answers.** When you make mistakes, teachers can explain what went wrong and demonstrate how to reach proper solutions. For example, attending a Skills Centre session to improve your academic writing.

## Complementing

**Tutors or lecturers can say what they like about the piece,** from word choice to sentence structure, the use of evidence or the development of a point.

### **TOP TIP**

You should note not only what is corrective feedback, but also what you are doing right!

## Suggesting

Advisors, tutors and lecturers can make **specific suggestions** about the piece. *For example, specific irrelevant elements in relation to the question asked. This could suggest allowing yourself more time, in general to complete assignments. It could also suggest that you need to do more research to understand an element/ topic/ theme, etc. in order to progress in the course.*

## Correcting

Often you will receive feedback about **grammar, spelling and continuity errors.** Everyone has writing "habits" and this allows you to become aware of what they are. *For example, the repetition of a word throughout your assignment.*

## Benefits of Feedback

Feedback **can improve your overall academic performance** (not just your written skills). It may provide you with information and **insights about your own work** and your approach to writing and studying because it **will sharpen your eye.**

## TOP TIP

Feedback can help increase satisfaction with your own work because you will be more confident and see mistakes you make more easily and are then able to avoid them better. Hence, motivate you to write and improve.

Generally, you will feel better equipped to assess your own work and writing in the future because you are training your brain to recognise mistakes and challenges faster and more effectively.

## The Challenges

It is very common among students to do the following:

- Given suggestions that were subsequently ignored?
- Lacking understanding about the feedback or the opinions that you have received.

## TOP TIP

No matter how thoughtful, specific, careful or positive you are - humans are not wired to receive feedback easily and we often chose fight or flight in the face of a perceived danger or threat (feedback). It is important to remember:

- ✓ Not to take it personal
- ✓ Consider what you could do differently to improve.

## What to Do with Feedback?

As you know yourself, and not just from academic life, **it's hard for us to feel like we're wrong, and it's even harder for us to hear that from others.** As it turns out, **there's a psychological basis** for both of these elements. One thing to keep in mind is that our brains view criticism as a threat to our survival. And, therefore, our brains are protective of us! **Neuroscientists say our brains go out of their way to make sure we always feel like we're in the right—even when we're not.** So, really, it is normal to feel defensive and to have a hard time sometimes when we receive feedback, our brains are trying to protect us! The following are some tips to approach the feedback you have been given:

- **Ask the person who offered it for clarification.**
- **Make use of the comments you receive.**
- **Re-write feedback in your own words.**

- **Create sticky notes to review before the next submission** to identify habits/ common errors.
- **Bring 2-3 questions** to the feedback session.
- **Use planning templates (i.e. mind maps) to make sure you are linking your corrections** back to your feedback.
- **Understand what you did right and do not overly focus on the negative.**
- We are often blind to our own mistakes - **try to see mistakes as puzzles** that will help your future self.

### **TOP TIP**

To ensure that you respond to feedback, in the best way possible, there are two critical elements that we need to learn: reflection and goal setting. Make goals for yourself by considering the following:

- What is one thing I could have done differently?
- What is one thing I could have done better?

## Phrases to respond to criticism

Here are a few phrases you could try and practice and then use if you are ever in a situation where you have to face criticism:

- "You know, you might be right..."
- "That's a good idea..."
- "What would that look like?"
- "What do you suggest I should do?"
- "I hadn't thought about that..."
- "Let me think about that..."
- "How could we make that work?"

### **TOP TIP**

Consider feedback as if it was your own and it is an opportunity to improve. Focus on the questions and observations rather than the mistakes. Recognise the rationale behind the recommendations and it is important to be open to suggestions which helps your own mindset to grow.

## Useful links

- Harms, Patricia L., and Deborah Britt Roebuck. "Teaching the Art and Craft of Giving and Receiving Feedback." *Business Communication Quarterly* 73.4 (2010): 413-431, Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1080569910385565>
- Petress, Dr. Ken. "Constructive Criticism: A Tool for Improvement." *College Student Journal* 34.3 (2000): 475, Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1080569910385565>
- *Perception Checking*. National Conflict Resolution Education in Teacher Education (CRETE) Collaborative Project, Available at: <https://creducation.net/learning-module/perception-checking/>
- Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., & Vohs, K. D. "Bad is stronger than good." *Review of General Psychology*, 5.4 (2001): 323-370, Available at: <https://research.vu.nl/en/publications/bad-is-stronger-than-good-2>
- Ford, Emily. "Consensus Decision-Making and its Possibilities in Libraries." In the Library with the Lead Pipe, January 25, 2012, Available at: [http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1082&context=ulib\\_fac](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1082&context=ulib_fac)

## Other Relevant Online PDFs

- NUI Marks Bands
- How to Build an Academic Argument
- Study Strategies
- Notetaking for Reading
- Notetaking for Lectures