

Characteristics of Constructive Feedback

1. It is intended to help.
2. It describes a specific behavior.
 - “You did a good job with the lesson.” vs. “The way you provided directions for the activity verbally and in writing, in a step-by-step fashion, helped the group know exactly what to do.”
3. It describes rather than judges. Focus on the behavior of a person rather than the character of a person.
 - “You’re great.” vs. “When you helped me clean up the room, I felt relieved, because I need to get home on time tonight.”
4. It describes impact rather than demands change.
 - “Either you stop reading the paper during the workshop or I’ll report you.” vs. “When you read the paper during the workshop, I wonder whether or not the workshop is meeting your needs.”
5. It focuses on a behavior that can be changed.
 - “You look so young. I can’t imagine the kids having any respect for your authority.”

Guidelines for Giving Constructive Feedback

1. Be clear and brief. It may help to ask the receiver to summarize what he/she heard you say.
2. Be immediate. Feedback is more meaningful when it is given closely in time to when the behavior occurred.
3. Be sure the receiver is ready to hear it. In a training situation, we assume that everyone wants and is ready to receive our feedback. When in doubt, it is best to check it out.
4. Focus on one or two points. You may have a lot of feedback to give, especially if you have been storing it. Too much feedback given at one time is likely to be overwhelming and not be perceived as helpful.
5. Be sincere and honest. An insincere comment is worse than no comment at all.
6. Show concern or caring. Focus on the behavior not the person.
7. Be sensitive to how the person receives the feedback.

Feedback Formula

“When you do _____ or _____ ...

◀ *State the behavior.*

the effect it had was _____ and
we _____ as a result.”

◀ *State the effect of the behavior
on the groups, the team, the
participant.*

“You might consider _____ instead.”

◀ *(Optional) State change desired.*

Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

1. Remember someone is sharing their perceptions of a situation or your behavior for you to consider – not facts.
2. Listen to feedback quietly and without defensiveness. Let the person giving feedback finish his/her sentences.
3. Ask for alternatives. If you are in doubt as to what you might have done differently in a particular situation, ask the person giving feedback for some ideas.
4. If you are feeling overloaded with feedback, say so.
5. Ask for clarification if you do not understand. Summarize/paraphrase to make sure you heard the person accurately.
6. Check out the feedback with others. If you receive a piece of feedback that troubles you or that you disagree with, it may be helpful to ask others if they have similar perceptions. This additional information can help you decide whether or not you want to change your behavior.