

As you read this list of characteristics of effective feedback, think about which are most important, and why. What difference will each make for student learning and improvement?

- Actionable**
Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which s/he has no control.
- Based on observable behavior**
Telling people what their motivations or intentions are can alienate them and contribute to a climate of resentment, suspicion, and distrust.
- Communicated clearly**
No matter what the intent, feedback is often threatening and thus subject to considerable distortion or misinterpretation.
- Descriptive**
Evaluative language can leave the recipient feeling judged and defensive, and thereby less likely to respond positively to feedback.
- Focused on behavior**
When feedback is focused on behavior it allows for the possibility of change; when it is articulated as a personality trait it implies that the feature is fixed.
- Followed by discussion of next steps**
The person who is giving feedback may greatly improve their helping skills by becoming acutely aware of the feedback's effects.
- Formulated to serve the needs of the recipient**
Feedback can be destructive when it serves only our own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.
- Manageable**
To overload a person with feedback is to reduce the possibility that s/he may be able to use what s/he receives effectively.
- Presented as information**
By sharing information, we leave people free to decide for themselves, in accordance with their own goals and needs.
- Solicited**
Feedback is most useful when the receiver actively seeks feedback.
- Specific**
General claims or comments are difficult to grasp (e.g. "you dominated the discussion"); specific examples lend credibility to the feedback.
- Timely**
In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Your feedback will be most effective if you make it:			
Specific	instead of	General	<p>Your pacing was good.</p> <p>Your pace was slow enough that I could have easily taken notes.</p>
Descriptive	instead of	Evaluative	<p>Your slides were ineffective.</p> <p>Your slides (especially the first three) were very text-heavy and cluttered, which made it difficult for me to follow along.</p>
Focused on observable behavior	instead of	Personal & focused on supposed motives	<p>You didn't seem to want to ask us questions.</p> <p>Your body language was stiff and you did not make eye contact with us. It conveyed to me that I should just be quiet and listen, and figure things out on my own if I don't understand.</p>
Prioritized & focused	instead of	An overwhelming laundry list	<p>You kept us engaged by using good examples and asking questions and making really clear transitions.</p> <p>The most helpful thing you did was to provide clear transitions, which helped me stay focused on the lesson.</p>