

Giving and receiving feedback

The chapter outlines the characteristics of effective feedback and the differences between giving and receiving feedback in in-person and online educational settings. After you explore the content of this chapter, you should be able to:

- ✓ Explain the role of giving and receiving feedback in learning,
- ✓ Differentiate between valuable and harmful feedback,
- ✓ Compare giving and receiving feedback in face-to-face, online synchronous, and online asynchronous learning.

The chapter includes the following sections:

1. *Why is feedback important?*
2. *Educator as a giver and receiver of feedback*
3. *Tips for giving and receiving effective feedback*
4. *Feedback in face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous education*
5. *The challenge of receiving feedback in an online setting*
6. *Questions for reflection*
7. *References and resources*



Design: freepik.com

1. Why is feedback important?

As social species, we continually receive and give feedback, even if we are not aware of it. Feedback lets learners know where and how they can improve by allowing them to confirm, correct, refine, and reshape their knowledge, beliefs, or habits.

Effective feedback is a vital aspect of learning. Simply put, feedback makes learners do a better job! They are more active during the learning process, less distracted, more focused on their goals, and more likely to keep on track and reflect on the ways they can improve their work. Also, effective feedback can boost the learners' motivation and help them develop effective learning strategies and skills. Take the opportunity to reflect on how you give feedback to learners and what they would find most useful.

Not all feedback is valuable

Giving good feedback is one of the most powerful ways you can improve learning. However, not all feedback is valuable.

Most of us know what it is like to be on the receiving end of bad feedback. We might feel like we are under attack, put down, or invalidated as a person. **Bad feedback is usually directed at a person in general**; it is unhelpfully vague and does not suggest what should be improved. It often comes from the needs of “the critic” rather than the person receiving it.

The presentation was pretty bad. It's like you don't take this class seriously. Being lazy will just hinder your progress!

On the other hand, **effective feedback** makes a clear distinction between the person and particular attitudes or work that is being examined with a critical eye. The person is always regarded as valuable, but that does not mean only praise should be given. In fact, it could be perceived as false and condescending. Finally, any feedback should be heard in a **supportive context** where everyone present can have a feeling of trust towards one another.

The presentation was immersive and contained useful examples. On the other hand, it would improve by highlighting and focusing on key topics, and making the text easier to read by changing its color.

2. Educator as a giver and receiver of feedback

Educators have a double role with feedback. They give it to the learners to help them keep track of their progress, and they receive feedback from the learners concerning their work or course in general.

Giving and receiving feedback may seem similar, but they depend on different skills and behaviours.

How to form and present feedback to your learners

Effective feedback should be based on the following three stages:

1. Feed up: makes the learning goals clear from the start.

- For example: *In this lesson, you will reach the following learning goals: You will be able to differentiate between valuable and damaging feedback on examples, you will be able to list at least three ways you can make giving online feedback more effective, and you will develop a way of making receiving feedback from learners clearer for you.*

2. Feedback: monitors and assesses the progress towards the set goals.

- Instant feedback for self-assessment: *Mark these feedback examples as either useful or damaging. How many did you get right?*
- Peer evaluation: *Develop your own schedule for giving feedback to your online learners. It will be peer-reviewed using previously defined criteria.*
- Direct feedback: *Your essay about challenges and possible solutions for receiving online feedback covered two important topics, and included a detailed discussion on 2D/3D body language. Solution for learners without the camera was underexplored: what can be used as a feedback system besides the Thumbs up emoji?*

3. Feedforward: gives directions and suggestions on where to go next.

- *Now when you are armed with basic knowledge about giving and receiving feedback, it is time to personalize it to your own needs. Take into consideration the features of the online tools you use, as well as your learning style, and think about how you can apply them to your teaching practice.*

Furthermore, **keep in mind different levels of feedback:**

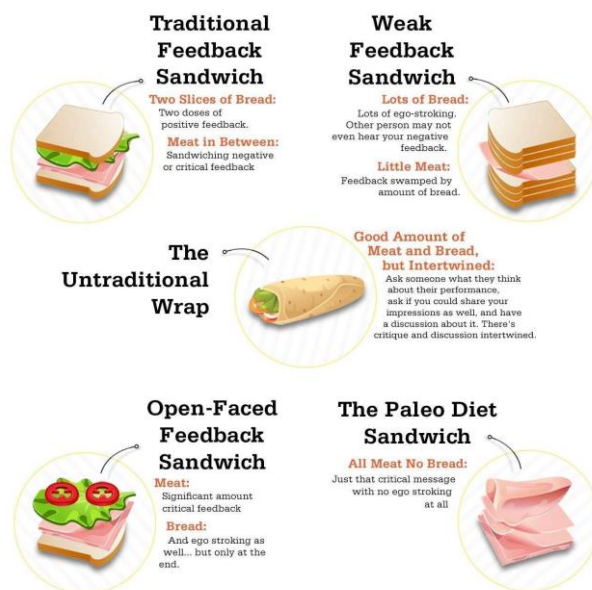
1. **Work-level** – „What?‟: immediate feedback that focuses on the learners' performance at the work or task at hand. While useful for monitoring progress, it does not give information for improvement and cannot be generalized on other tasks.
 - *That's the correct way to use the chat feature!*
2. **Process-level** – „How?‟: feedback that focuses on the process a learner uses to complete the task. It can be generalized to all learning, not just the task at hand. It should be given after the task in question for younger or new learners. Giving this kind of feedback could be longer, for example, during the reflection period.
 - *You might find it easier to concentrate on the task at hand if you do short five-minute breaks every twenty to thirty minutes.*

Giving and receiving feedback online

Giving and receiving feedback is **especially crucial and more challenging in an online setting**. So, how can you plan and implement it effectively?

1. First, you can offer feedback during one-on-one meetings, group work, or presentations.
2. Second, you can give written feedback on the students' work.
3. Third, students can provide feedback to you and their peers.

Reinventing the Feedback Sandwich



3. Tips for giving and receiving effective feedback

Tips for giving effective feedback

The key is to have opportunities to give feedback that fosters the growth mindset and validates the person while targeting their specific work and actions.

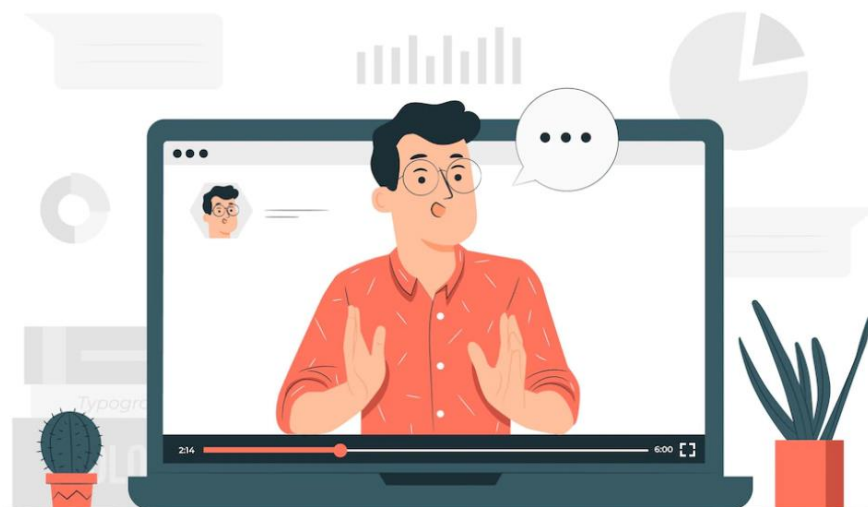
1. **Focus on the goal.** Be specific and descriptive while considering the learning goals. Base your feedback on concrete and observable behaviours or tasks. Describe your views, and do not make presumptions about what the learner should be feeling or doing.
2. **Focus on the message.** Be realistic, timely, and direct. Always focus on the behaviour and offer feedback on the things that person can change. Time your feedback accurately and be honest but considerate.
3. **Focus on fostering a positive relationship.** Be positive and do not compare. Do not focus only on the challenging aspects and highlight only those things you genuinely appreciate and incorporate a “working on strengths” approach. To foster a growth mindset and intrinsic motivation, always treat each person’s work as their own, not part of some supposed competition with others.
4. **Focus on the self.** Be diligent and aware of your internal bias. Check if your feedback truly reflects the work or task at hand. Is it an accurate reflection of what you want to express? Being in a heightened emotional state could distort your feedback. Feedback is not a tool to deal with your own negative emotions at the expense of others. Finally, do not overload the person: focus on one thing at a time (for example, one thing to admire and one thing to correct)!
5. **Provide recommendations and solutions.** Constructive feedback should include a specific solution or recommendation.

Tips for receiving feedback

- ✓ **Be explicit** when asking for feedback. Indicate what kind of feedback you want.
- ✓ **Use active listening.** Listen carefully to the person giving feedback and ask questions for clarification if necessary. Make sure you understand what is being said and summarize the message to see if you understood it correctly. Also, keep your attention on the person giving you feedback, and do not forget about body language! Carefully examine the other person’s body language to pick up cues (if possible), and be aware of the messages you are sending with your body language.
- ✓ **Keep an open mind.** Try to avoid putting up barriers and concentrate on being as receptive to new ideas and different opinions as you can. Don’t be defensive - engage!
- ✓ **Reflect and implement.** Assess the value of the received feedback and be aware of your reaction to it. Then, decide what to do about it. You can ask for a second opinion from someone else if you are not satisfied.

TIPS FOR ONLINE FEEDBACK: Four ingredients for effective online feedback

1. **Maximize the use of technology:** use multiple types of communication. Use quizzes and polls instead of tests and make it fun (visuals, GIFs, emojis, memes, etc.). Use email, classroom messaging, the announcement section, instant visual feedback (thumbs up works wonders!), pre-recorded audio or video messages, and set up „online office hours“ where the learners can reach you for synchronous contact.
2. **Use rubrics, templates, and automated responses:** using scoring tools is much faster than the „formal“ way of assessing work and provides instant feedback. Use a combination of written feedback, audio, and video materials. Think about gamifying your feedback! Apps like [Google Forms](#) or [Mentimeter](#) can bring new ideas to your work.
3. **Have a system:** give timely and regular feedback. You can schedule giving feedback so that your learners know what to expect. For example, you can provide feedback within 72 hours of finished assignments. You can schedule your emails in [Google](#) or [Outlook](#), or [Apple](#). Agree with your learners on the timeline at the beginning and manage their expectations. Use multiple types of feedback to maximize gains: learner self-reflection, peer review, group feedback, teacher feedback, and automated feedback.
4. **Create a feedback-rich environment:** vary the feedback depending on the assignment, group size, and temperament. When starting your program, start with an opening round where everybody gets a chance to say something personal and subject-related. Always close with a reflection circle (*What is your takeaway from this lesson? How do you feel?*) and celebrate individual or group achievements. Think about the tone of your feedback and the ratio of positive and “needs to be improved” feedback.



Design: freepik.com

4. Feedback in face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous education

Face-to-face education	Synchronous education	Asynchronous education
<p>In face-to-face education, you can combine more ways of giving feedback to your learners. You can give immediate feedback in many ways: learners can see if they are doing well just from your body language! It is easy to set additional time for one-on-one sessions with the students and engage them in peer-to-peer evaluation.</p>	<p>In synchronous education, it is important to utilize more channels of giving feedback to your learners. Remember that not all learners will be present in the same way (camera on/off)! Keep it short, give immediate feedback, and use all the options your app of choice offers.</p> <p>In an online setting, feedback also becomes a way of building relationships with your learners. Use it often, both on an individual and a group level. Focus on giving positive feedback to as many learners as possible for their individual contributions so they feel motivated to engage.</p> <p>Motivate all learners to give feedback to each other by using emojis, thumbs up, and similar visual stimuli.</p>	<p>It is most important to communicate a feedback plan with your learners in asynchronous education.</p> <p>Set up automatic feedback using quizzes and other self-assessment tools directly in your lectures or materials.</p> <p>Create opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback. You can make a peer-to-peer grading opportunity and set up a forum or a messaging board. For example, you can upload student tasks to Padlet and ask the group to react to the ones they like the most.</p> <p>Think about providing feedback through video or audio! While still not perfect, the tone of voice and body posture provide more information than a Word document.</p> <p>You can use Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams to meet and communicate with your learners, and TechSmith Capture to record yourself while giving feedback on specific learner's work. Take the time to meet learners for individual assessment – set office hours for face-to-face meetings.</p>

<p>BODY LANGUAGE: keep your stance open. Use gestures to accentuate and make your feedback genuine – people judge others who don't gesture to be less honest.</p> <p>Be careful not to intrude on the learners' personal space because it can make them stop listening and focus on the uncomfortable situation.</p> <p>Make eye contact to emphasize important feedback, but be mindful not to single out individuals for long periods of working in a group or class setting.</p> <p>Use a neutral tone of voice and repeat the important bits you want the learner to remember.</p>	<p>BODY LANGUAGE: It is important to use the camera as much as possible. You can share your screen while talking about the content, but it is important that your learners can see your full face when receiving feedback from you.</p> <p>You won't be able to gauge learners' reactions if you are looking directly at the camera but try to look directly at the camera toward the end of your talk.</p> <p>When gesturing, bring your hands up and exaggerate slightly to catch the movements on camera. However, don't move your hands directly in front of the camera if you want your learners to pay attention to the message.</p> <p>Try to make your talking interesting by modulating your pitch, loudness, and rhythm more than in face-to-face education. When using silence, make it clear it's not because of technical issues!</p> <p>Try making your feedback sessions distinct in some way by changing your backdrop (for example, change your Zoom background).</p>	<p>BODY LANGUAGE: The written word is stripped of body language cues that make up for more than 70% of communication. Use digital tools to make your feedback more visual and provide some of the cues usually reserved for face-to-face meetings. Use an emoji 😊, underline, color, link a song, a photo, or a video that conveys your emotions.</p>
<p>LANGUAGE: Keep your feedback tied to a topic or task at hand. Going up-and-personal is best to be avoided, except when directly asked.</p>	<p>LANGUAGE: Use a more straightforward sentence structure. Repeat important information. Accompany your sentence with an emoji, a song, or visual or auditory aids.</p>	<p>LANGUAGE: Use clear sentence structure. Restrain from using metaphors, sarcasm, or using a lot of exclamation points. Never use caps lock, as it may be interpreted as a shout.</p> <p>Use more visual ways of communication: emojis, pictures, GIFs, etc.</p>

<p>BALANCING THE INDIVIDUAL WITH THE GROUP: Give immediate feedback on individual contribution and group feedback at the end of the session.</p>	<p>BALANCING THE INDIVIDUAL WITH THE GROUP: Use short bursts of immediate feedback for unique contribution - give a thumbs up, post a reaction, or send a person a short personal chat message. When giving group feedback, ask for similar kinds of engagement from your audience, so they can join in and celebrate their successes.</p>	<p>BALANCING THE INDIVIDUAL WITH THE GROUP: Set up a way of giving individual and group feedback. It is easy to feel isolated and alone in asynchronous education so create opportunities for group feedback to foster the feeling of a group: open a forum, or make a chart that shows group data (be careful not to single out anyone, though)!</p> <p>Make a graph that visualizes group effort and record a message for everyone!</p>
---	---	--

5. The challenge of receiving feedback in an online setting

The biggest challenge for online educators is receiving feedback from their learners. We can't guess a reaction and body language while the camera is turned off or while our asynchronous learners are going through the online course at their own pace.

First, think about the way you want to receive feedback. Do you want written feedback? Are you satisfied with marks on a set of criteria? Would you like to organize a focus group of your learners to get the feedback you need?

- **Tip:** If there is time, combine different strategies! Gain immediate feedback by directing your learners to put emojis, short messages, or evaluation forms with simple questions at the end of each session. Do a more thorough feedback session at the end of the course with a longer evaluation form, or gather some of the learners for a talk.

Second, set up a set of criteria for yourself. Which skills do you want to work on? What do you consider requirements for a successful online educator?

- **Tip:** You can set up your learning plan and/or use skill frameworks (for example, [The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators](#) (DigCompEdu)).

Third, communicate with your learners. Do you want them to fill in an evaluation form at the end of each session or a whole course? What kind of language should they use – formal, informal, emojis? Will it be anonymous?

- **Tip:** Engage somebody else in leading the process, so your learners feel free to give feedback! Always provide the chance for both anonymous and more in-personal feedback from more motivated learners.

6. Questions for reflection

1. *Think about the most impactful feedback you got. Would you consider it effective, and why? Can you apply some of the things it did well?*
2. *Do you give your learners feedback more than once? What purpose does the various feedback serve?*
3. *Do you use a protocol or a plan that details the way you are using feedback to improve your work? If not, what would you put in it?*

7. References and resources

Boud, D. (1991). *Implementing Student Self-Assessment*. Sydney: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

Hardavella, G., Aamli-Gagnat, A., Saad, N., Rousalova, I., Sreter, K.B. (2017). How to give and receive feedback effectively. *Breathe*, 13, 327-333.

Hattie, J., Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.

Krause, U.-M., Stark, R., Mandl, H. (2009). The effects of cooperative learning and feedback on e-learning in statistics. *Learning and Instruction*, 19 (2), 158-170.

Leibold, N., Schwarz, L.M. (2015). The Art of Giving Online Feedback. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 15 (1), 34-46.

Vollmeyer, R., Rheinberg, F. (2005). A surprising effect of feedback on learning. *Learning and Instruction*, 15(6), 589-602.