ACADEMIC SKILLS

Worksheet

Give feedback (1)

Special Edition

C21 ENGLISH FOR THE 21st CENTURY

B1 Pre-intermediate / B1+ Intermediate

Student name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

C21 SKILLS

COMMUNICATION: The feedback sandwich

When you give feedback, it's important to be positive and encouraging. Any criticism should be constructive. Try these steps:

1 Compliment: Say something positive about the writing.
2 Suggestion: Suggest improvements, for example, punctuation and spelling.
3 Compliment: Make another posiitve comment.

You learn about giving constructive feedback in *C21 English for the 21st Century*, Level 4. In academic settings, giving and receiving feedback is very important. Feedback is a form of criticism that tells us about what we are doing well and what we could improve in our presentations, written work, etc. It is important that feedback is given in a positive and polite way so the listener can use the ideas to improve their work.

Practice

1 **Look at the comments by tutors and students and discuss the questions.**

1
Terrible. You're not preparing sufficiently for lectures, essays or exams!

2
Good point in that discussion! I hadn't understood that before.

3
Hey, nice talk today. Loved the charts!

4
Not good. Say something if you disagree with other students.

5
These meetings are boring! I know how well I'm doing.

6
Well done. It's well structured, with excellent written conclusions.

7
You handing that rubbish in? It's got so many mistakes.

8
Your grade is C. Interesting visuals, but a little quiet.

a Who is speaking (student or tutor)?
b Who is listening (student or tutor)?
c What academic activity are the comments about (presentation, essay, seminar or tutorial)?
d Are the comments positive, negative or balanced?
e How would you react to these comments?

2 **Read the list of reasons to give feedback. Rank them in importance from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important).**

_____ Make you feel bad about your work.
_____ Explain how a grade for your work is decided.
_____ Identify good points in your work.
_____ Tell you how to improve your work.

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_____ Motivate you to improve your work.
_____ Make you feel happy about your work.
_____ Develop your ability to evaluate your own work.
_____ Improve your ability to learn.
_____ Make sure the next work is better.
_____ Tell you everything that was good and bad about your work.

3 **Read a student's feedback about his academic activities and discuss the questions that follow.**

Course Feedback – Term 1
Student: *Jack Thomas*

Lectures
- *Attends all lectures.*
- *No participation or questions.*

Essays
- *Little background reading evident.*
- *Rarely answers the question.*

Projects
- *Good topics chosen.*
- *Poor teamwork skills in group projects.*

Seminars
- *Little preparation evident.*
- *Interrupting other speakers and rude.*

Other
- *Timekeeping good and well-organized.*
- *Needs to work harder (preparation for essays, lectures and seminars).*

a Which points are positive?
b Which points are negative?
c Overall, is the feedback positive or negative? Why?
d What advice would you give Jack to improve?

4 02 **Read and listen to the conversations between Jack and two of his friends. Discuss the questions that follow.**

Conversation 1

Bea It's really bad, Jack. They'll kick you out!
Jack Why do you say that?
Bea Well. You're terrible in seminars. Your preparation isn't good. You're so lazy. And … you're so rude to others. You keep interrupting!
Jack You're wrong! I'm not lazy. You're talking nonsense.
Bea You have a problem with your essays. You don't do any background reading. The tutor's right, you never answer the questions.
Jack Huh? Your essays aren't winning any prizes.
Bea Then there's the projects. You don't do any work. You can't work with other students.
Jack Nonsense. Teamwork is one of my best skills.
Bea You don't ask any questions in lectures. You never participate!
Jack That's not fair!
Bea And you don't work hard enough. You're really lazy.
Jack Right, that's it. I'm going!

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Conversation 2

Yasmin Well, how do you think you did?
Jack I guess I can do better.
Yasmin You made some really good points in that last seminar. However, you could probably interrupt a little less. What do you think?
Jack Yeah, perhaps I do interrupt sometimes. I'll think about that in future seminars.
Yasmin Good idea. It's difficult to find time to do all the work, but I'm sure you could do a little more reading for essays in the future. That might improve your grades, don't you think?
Jack Yes, you're right. It should result in answering the question better, too.
Yasmin Definitely. I see they really like your project topics! I know it's difficult to work in a team sometimes, but perhaps you could spend more time with the team to try to improve.
Jack I agree. Maybe a few more meetings would help.
Yasmin Sounds like a good idea. They really like your timekeeping and organization, I see. Not asking questions is a bit of an issue for them. What would you say?
Jack Yeah. I get a little nervous asking in front of everyone. Maybe I should ask after the lecture.

a Is each conversation rude or polite?
b Is Jack's response positive or negative?
c Which words are negative-sounding?
d Are Jack's friends kind and understanding, or aggressive and defensive?
e Is the criticism effective?
f Will Jack improve or make changes?

TIP

To get a positive result from feedback, avoid language that is too direct, e.g. *you are* … *you don't* … and language that is too negative, e.g. *terrible*, *problem*, *never participate*, *really lazy*.

5 **Softer feedback is usually more effective. Find examples of the following strategies in Conversation 2.**

a Give positive comments first.
b Use *perhaps*, *possibly*, etc.
c Use modals like *could*, *would*, etc.
d Ask questions instead of making statements.
e Moderate your criticism with phrases like *a bit*, *a little*, etc.
f Ask for the other person's opinion.
g Show you understand that the other person finds something difficult.
h Use suggestions, not accusations.

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6 **Soften the feedback using the strategies in Exercise 5.**

a
Your presentation was too long.

b
You must provide handouts for the audience.

c
Rubbish! You don't have any evidence for point two.

d
The essay is poor. Your topic sentences are really bad.

e
Your seminar preparation isn't good. You're so lazy.

f
The tutor's right – you never answer the questions after a talk.

g
You can't work with other students. You don't listen to other people's ideas.

h
You're disorganized, and you often hand in assignments late.

TIP

By presenting feedback to someone in a softer or more positive way, the listener is more likely to listen to your ideas, respond positively and make the changes necessary to improve.

7 **Take turns role-playing one of the feedback scenarios and record your conversations. Listen to other people's conversations. In groups, present your feedback on what was good, what could be better and any suggestions you have.**

Scenario 1

Student A is talking to Student B about an essay. Student B's essay has:

- lots of spelling/grammar mistakes
- a good opening/introduction
- unclear paragraphs – no topic sentences
- not many ideas – no research or background reading
- no conclusion or summary

Scenario 2

Student A is talking to Student B about their presentation. Student B:

- had lots of language errors on their slides
- didn't make eye contact and spoke too quietly
- forgot what to say – seemed unprepared
- had good handouts for the audience
- had no clear conclusion

Reflect

8 **In pairs, listen to a recording of your conversation in Exercise 7. How could you improve your feedback?**

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