

Basics

As a student, you will almost certainly give and receive feedback about academic activities. When you are giving feedback, including positive statements and constructive criticism is key to motivating the listener. Equally, to receive feedback, you need to be open-minded. You need to be ready to accept your mistakes and think about how to improve.

The academic context

In the academic world, there are numerous situations where you need to give and receive feedback. Examples include: presentations, seminars, study groups, tutorials, exams and discussions.

Key features

- Offer positive comments first:

I liked ...
It was interesting how you ...
People really appreciated how you ...

- Offer suggestions for improvement:

Why don't you ...
How about ...
It might be good to ...

- Respond by accepting any fair criticism:

Yes, you're right ...
Yes ...

- If you made a mistake, accept it:

I should have ...
I could have ...

- Suggest what you could do to improve:

I'll try to ...
Next time I'll ...

- Use polite intonation.

Challenges / difficulties

It takes discipline to always be positive and open to criticism of work we have done. Focus on the benefits of improving your work and not taking comments personally.

How can I develop this skill?

Practise giving and receiving feedback to your peers in study groups. Try to work out the best ways to help and encourage each other.

Learning outcome

When you have mastered this skill, you will be able to use positive comments and body language to support your peers. You will be able to respond to criticism by accepting mistakes and discussing ways you can approach your future academic activities.

Theory to practice

Look at the responses to feedback between two students below. What feedback did each student receive?

1 Erin _____

Christophe Thanks for that. I should have prepared more. I'll do more reading next time.

2 Hasan _____

Charlie Sure. I hadn't thought of that. I could have added more examples, I suppose. Next time I'll make a point of doing that.

3 Sophia _____

Samit I can see now that you have a point. The images shouldn't have been so small. I'll stand at the back to check if they're OK next time before speaking.

Ways to get more practice

Responding well to critical comments takes practice. Give a friend a short piece of work you've done, and ask them to suggest something you could improve. Respond to their idea, then see how well they think you dealt with the criticism.