

Feedback that Feeds Learning

OVERVIEW

Good feedback is one of the most powerful tools a teacher has. Few skills advance student learning quicker or more efficiently than quality feedback. Clear, consistent feedback also shapes student behavior by setting expectations and reinforcing growth.

PROCEDURE

1. First, you need to understand the elements of good feedback. Good quality feedback has three elements: *timely, actionable, and specific*.
 - a. **Timely** means that it occurs while students still care about their work. That's usually as fast as possible.
 - b. **Actionable** feedback is something students can act on. They need to know what they can do to do better in the future, or to rework their current work.
 - c. **Specific** feedback names exactly what worked or didn't work, and where. Vague comments like "be clearer" don't help, but pointing to a sentence, step, or choice does.
2. **Anchor feedback to one thing at a time.** Choose the most important piece.
3. **Write one sentence about the work.** Describe exactly what the student did (without using praise or judgment words). Examples:
 - a. "You included two pieces of evidence, but you did not explain either one."
 - b. "Your claim is stated in the introduction, but it isn't referenced again."
 - c. "You solved the equation correctly but skipped showing your steps."
 - d. "You continued your side conversation while I was giving directions."
 - e. "Your answer addresses part of the question but not the cause."
4. **Write one sentence about the fix.** Tell the student what to change, add, or redo. For this, you'll want to use clear verbs. Examples:
 - a. "Add one sentence explaining why this evidence supports your claim."
 - b. "Rework step 3 to show how you arrived at this answer."
 - c. "Once I get the class's attention, your conversation needs to stop."
5. **Deliver it fast.** Say it aloud, write it in the margin, or drop it in comments on the same day whenever possible.
6. **Build in follow-through.** Give students time to revise, correct, or practice using the feedback.

TIPS/TRICKS

- **Keep the feedback short.** This keeps you from getting overwhelmed, and students don't read long feedback chains. They will almost certainly read two sentences.
- **Give feedback while students are still working.** Circulate and comment as they work to avoid taking everything home.
- **Use comment banks and common phrases.** Students often need similar feedback, and most tools allow you to save and reuse it.
- **Use AI to polish feedback, not make decisions.** The instructional call should always be yours.