

How to give constructive feedback:

TalkWise Worksheet



What does good feedback sound like? What voices, or ways of expressing yourself, do you need to enable feedback to be both critical and constructive? How can you deliver feedback that's likely to make a difference?

This worksheet is designed to help you prepare the three ingredients required for good feedback, and to practice using the related voices to deliver your feedback effectively. We recommend using this worksheet if you have identified an important upcoming occasion which will require you to give feedback.

The 3 ingredients for good feedback, and the sequence in which to deliver them are:

1. The Observation
2. The Implications
3. The Modification

Use the reflection questions below to prepare your feedback ingredients.

The Observation

- What is the particular piece of behaviour to which the feedback refers?
- Will the other person recognise this behaviour?
- What example(s) could you provide to help them recognise it?
- What else might you need to do to establish the reality and credibility of your observation?
- What does the observation sound like in the Articulate voice?

Example observation: *'You arrived late for work on Monday morning. That wasn't the first time you've done that.'*

The Implications

- Why does your observation matter?
- What are the consequences or repercussions of the behaviour you have observed?
- Are there further implications for task, process, people, relationships or reputation?
- What is the new awareness you want to ensure in the feedback receiver?
- What do the implications sound like in the Evaluate voice?

Example implications: *'Because you were late, we had to find someone else to do the job you were working on. The production process fell behind schedule. If we miss our despatch times, the customer complains and we can incur penalty charges for late delivery.'*

The Modification

- What is an acceptable behaviour or level of performance in relation to the issue?
- What do you want the other person to do differently in future?
- What level of directness is appropriate when you share the modification? (Note, this will depend on the relationship) Is it a suggestion, or are you telling them what to do?
- What does the modification sound like in the Direct, or Advise, voice?

Example modification: 'If you find you're going to be unavoidably late, then get a message to your supervisor beforehand and as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangement can be made promptly.'

The final crucial step is to practice: Practice speaking your feedback out loud. The following prompts may be useful:

- What will you actually say?
- What words will you use?
- Which voices will you use?
- How does it sound when you say it out loud?
- How can your non-verbals (posture, gesture, tone, pitch, pace and volume) help you deliver your message effectively?
- How do you expect this to land? What might you adjust to help it land better?

Note: It is sometimes easier to work through the implications and modification first, and then identify the specific observation(s). This is fine. Use your reflections on those ingredients as a prompt to recall a specific episode or behaviour to form the observation. The feedback does not need to be constructed in the same sequence as it will be delivered.

Summary and worked example

Step	Voice	Sounds like
1. Observation	Articulate (a matter-of-fact, position-setting voice)	<i>During yesterday's meeting you interrupted our visitor repeatedly. I counted 4 occasions when you talked over her while she was trying to explain her concerns about the project.'</i>
2. Implications	Evaluate (the assessing voice)	<i>It created unnecessary tension in the meeting. It showed a lack of respect to her as a visitor. It made you sound both rude and opinionated. It makes me wonder whether you are ready to be invited to events like this.'</i>
3. Modification	Direct (the directive voice) or Advise (a guiding voice)	<i>It's not acceptable to me for members of my team to talk over our visitors, whether they are clients, prospects or suppliers. I expect you not to do that again.'</i> <i>'I suggest you ring her and apologise for the way you behaved. I'd also like you to ask more questions during discussions rather than pushing your own views so forcefully, as you do at the moment.'</i>

Use the table below to capture your own ingredients ahead of giving your feedback.

Step	Voice	Sounds like
1. Observation	Articulate (a matter-of-fact, position-setting voice)	
2. Implications	Evaluate (the assessing voice)	
3. Modification	Direct (the directive voice) or Advise (a guiding voice)	