

Feedback Improvement Activity

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As teachers, we wish to write feedback that enables and inspires. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to write comments that are unclear or deflating. Take a look at the comments in the table below and offer a diagnosis of them. How would you rewrite them to make them more helpful? You can find example 'answers' on page 2.

Feedback	Evaluation of Feedback	Alternative feedback
Example: "Good."	What is good? The student might not automatically know.	"Good use of supporting evidence."
"This doesn't make sense."		
"Back up assertions with evidence."		
"Poor grammar. You should always spell and grammar check your work."		
"I really like what you did here, but ..."		
"This seems to be a really solid piece of work. However ..."		
"Avoid using the passive voice."		

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Feedback	Evaluation of Feedback	Alternative feedback
“This doesn’t make sense.”	This comment is overly brusque.	“Can you find a clearer way of saying this?”
“Back up assertions with evidence.”	This can come across as barking orders.	“Part of what we are trying to encourage is the skill of making arguments supported by evidence. Can you find any supporting evidence for this assertion?”
“Poor grammar. You should always spell and grammar check your work.”	This comes across as judgmental. Crockett (2016) suggest that we avoid the word “should” altogether in feedback, because it can carry an implicit sense of judgment and punishment.	“The grammar is not quite right here. Try grammar checking it in Word or use the free app Grammarly.com.”
“I really like what you did here, <i>but</i> ...” or “This seems to be a really solid piece of work. <i>However</i> ...”	These examples are taken from Crockett (2016). He advises to avoid using the words, “but” and “however”. They give with one hand and slap down with the other.	“I really like what you did here, and I think you’re on the right track. Why not try adding/continuing with/trying this as well?”
“Avoid using the passive voice.”	Students may not understand this. We either need to teach them how to follow up on comments like this for themselves or we could give comments along the lines of the one to the right.	“APA guidelines advise using the active rather than passive voice. To find out more visit the Owl Purdue website .”