



Tools for Feedback

What is this?

A small selection of tools and guided reflections you can use to improve your confidence and success with feedback.

Reflecting on feedback

To get better at feedback, a good place to start is to reflect on your past experiences with feedback.

Think of a time when you received feedback...

- *What led to the feedback?*
- *Who gave it to you?*
- *How did you feel before, during and after?*
- *What impact did the feedback have? (i.e. what changes did it lead to.)*
- *Would you describe the experience as positive or negative?*
- *What can you learn from this reflection?*

Feedback prerequisites

For successful feedback conversations, there should be a foundation of **trust**. Without reciprocal trust...

- You won't receive honest feedback
- The feedback you give won't be valued

Trust accumulates slowly and in small increments, yet it can be eroded quickly.

Reflect on...

- *What behaviours build trust?*
- *What behaviours can erode it?*
- *Which trust-building behaviours am I practising, and where can I do better?*





Processing feedback

Another important skill for mastering feedback is **self-awareness**.

The **ABC growth model** is a useful tool for cultivating self-awareness. It can also be used for processing some types of feedback.

ABC growth model

Activating event	Belief	Consequence
The thing that led to the emotional response.	<p>The underlying belief that led to the reaction.</p> <p>These are often faulty, and need dismantling or substituting for more helpful alternatives.</p>	The emotional consequence (i.e. how you felt)

Think about a negative experience with feedback, or a time when you felt 'triggered' by something someone said or did.

Practice using the ABC technique on yourself.

- Start by identifying the activating event
- Next articulate the emotional consequence
- Finally, think about the underlying belief that led to that reaction.

What other beliefs are available?

How might that change things?

Further reading: <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/psychology/the-abc-model>





Assuming positive intent

Another tip when processing feedback is to **assume positive intent**. In other words, assume the feedback was given with good intentions, even if the execution was poor!

This is also helpful to remember in group/team situations when reflecting on things that have gone wrong (i.e. after an incident, during a post-mortem.)

Assuming positive intent is implicit in **The Prime Directive**:

"Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand."

- Norm Kerth (2001), [Project Retrospectives: A Handbook for Team Review](#)





Requesting feedback

The quality of the feedback we receive has a lot to do with how we ask for it. Here are some tips on how to frame a feedback request.

- 1. Reflect on what you want from the feedback.**

For example, do you want to...

...understand what you need to do to improve in your current role?

...to validate an idea or approach?

...to understand how people experience working with you?

- 2. Consider who is best placed to give this feedback.**

There is little value in feedback that comes from a source you don't trust.

3-5 people is often enough to generate useful data.

- 3. Consider when and how to ask for this feedback.**

Your workplace may have tooling in place for facilitating feedback requests.

If you choose to use another channel, consider the timing, and how you would like to receive their feedback (i.e. verbal or written.)

- 4. Ask focused questions that will guide them towards feedback that is useful.**

For example, if you're seeking to understand how people experience your presence in meetings, *ask a question about that*.

If you ask too general a question, you may get a less useful response.

Keeping it focused gives you more control over what comes back.

- 5. Make it easy for them.**

Giving feedback is hard, and time-consuming. Anything you can do to make it easier for them to respond will benefit you too. For example, it may help to give them some context, or to link them to data or information that can help them.

- 6. Little and often.** Don't ask for too much! Focus on 1-3 areas of interest. These may be areas linked to your current learning goals, or skills you practised on a recent piece of work. Repeat the process at appropriate intervals.

Practice framing a feedback request

- *Share it with someone you trust to give meaningful feedback*
- *You could even ask for feedback on the feedback request!*



Framing feedback

If you've been asked for feedback, here are a couple of simple frameworks that might help you structure your feedback.

However, don't feel you always need to use a framework. Use your powers of empathy and your knowledge of the person to help you find the right words.

Start, Stop, Continue

This is a good one to use for giving general feedback on someone's work, or on a specific aspect of their work. It can also be used in a team setting.

Start	Stop	Continue
Things you suggest they start doing.	Things that are less good and which should be stopped.	Things they are doing well and should continue doing.

Further reading: <https://worldofwork.io/2019/07/feedback-start-stop-continue/>

SBI

This is a good one to use for delivering feedback to someone on their behaviour, and helping them to understand the impact of their behaviour on others.

Situation	Behaviour	Impact
Describe the situation... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When and where did this occur?</i> • <i>What happened?</i> • <i>"In the standup yesterday..."</i> 	Describe the behaviours you want them to address... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"You said..."</i> • <i>"You did/did not..."</i> • <i>"I noticed..."</i> <p>This should be your direct observations only.</p>	Describe the impact of their behaviour on you, the business, or other people... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"I felt..."</i> • <i>"I noticed people..."</i>

Further reading:

<https://www.mindtools.com/ay86376/the-situation-behavior-impact-feedback-tool>





Giving unsolicited feedback

If you haven't been asked for feedback, it's always good to seek permission from the recipient first. This way, they are more likely to be in a state where they are open and responsive to the feedback.

Seeking permission can be as simple as dropping them a message ahead of the feedback,

"I really appreciate you taking the time to deliver that demo earlier, and I have some feedback for you. Would you like me to share it with you?"

You might also ask how and when they'd like the feedback (i.e. face-to-face, on slack etc.)

Feedback can be difficult, so give them as much control as possible over the process.

