

# Giving and Receiving Feedback: A Guide for Mentors and Mentees

Structured Advice for Effective and Professional Feedback Exchanges

## Introduction

Feedback is a vital element of any successful mentoring relationship. When delivered and received effectively, it promotes growth, learning, and positive change. This guide provides structured advice for mentors on giving constructive feedback—focussing on behaviour rather than personality—and for mentees on how to professionally solicit and receive feedback.

## For Mentors: Giving Constructive Feedback

1. Focus on Behaviour, Not Personality
2. Always address specific actions or behaviours rather than personal traits. For instance, instead of saying, “You’re careless with deadlines,” try, “I noticed the last two reports were submitted after the deadline. Let’s discuss how to manage your workload so this doesn’t happen in future.”
3. Be Specific and Objective
4. Provide concrete examples. Avoid vague statements like “You need to improve.” Instead, clarify what was observed and the impact it had. For example, “During yesterday’s meeting, you interrupted colleagues several times, which made it difficult for others to share their ideas.”
5. Balance Positive and Developmental Feedback  
Start with strengths before addressing areas for improvement. This approach builds confidence and openness. For example, “Your presentation was engaging and well-structured. To make it even better, consider slowing down when explaining complex data.”
6. Use “I” Statements  
Frame feedback from your perspective to avoid sounding accusatory. For example, “I felt that the project lost direction when we skipped the planning stage,” rather than “You caused the project to fail.”
7. Encourage Dialogue  
Invite the mentee to share their perspective. Ask open-ended questions such as, “How did you feel about the outcome?” or “What do you think worked well and what could be improved?”
8. Provide Feedback Promptly  
Give feedback as soon as possible after the observed behaviour while it’s still fresh in everyone’s mind. However, choose an appropriate time and private setting.
9. Offer Support and Solutions  
End with constructive suggestions and offer your help. For example, “Would you like some resources on time management?” or “Let’s set up regular check-ins to monitor progress.”

## For Mentees: Soliciting and Receiving Feedback Professionally

1. **Be Proactive**  
Don't wait for feedback to be offered. Ask targeted questions such as, "What could I have done differently in the meeting?" or "Are there ways I can improve my project management skills?"
2. **Listen Actively and Without Defensiveness**  
Focus on understanding the feedback rather than responding immediately. Avoid interrupting or justifying your actions. Take notes and ask for clarification if needed.
3. **Separate Behaviour from Self-Worth**  
Remember that feedback is about specific actions, not your value as a person. Try to view it as an opportunity for growth rather than criticism.
4. **Ask for Examples**  
If feedback is vague, politely request concrete examples: "Could you give me an example of when I could have communicated more clearly?"
5. **Clarify and Summarise**  
Restate the feedback in your own words to ensure you've understood: "So, you're saying that I need to be more concise in my emails, is that right?"
6. **Express Gratitude**  
Thank your mentor for their feedback, regardless of whether it's positive or developmental. This encourages ongoing, honest communication.
7. **Act on the Feedback**  
Develop an action plan to address the feedback and follow up with your mentor on progress. This demonstrates commitment to improvement.

## Conclusion

Constructive feedback, when given and received professionally, strengthens mentoring relationships and supports personal and professional growth. By focussing on behaviour rather than personality, maintaining open dialogue, and approaching feedback with a growth mindset, both mentors and mentees can maximise the benefits of their partnership.