

Understanding Feedback

APSU Writing Center Handout

Understanding Feedback on Your Academic Writing

Seeking feedback is essential for improving your writing as a student and for professional growth.

Remember: Feedback is not a judgement of your writing ability.

Constructive Criticism is a tool to help you develop as a critical thinker and writer.

Why Ask for Feedback?

Asking for feedback means you're no longer working in isolation. Feedback:

- Clarifies uncertainties and refines arguments
- Strengthens overall writing quality
- Promotes continuous improvement
- Is encouraged by the APSU Writing Center to foster growth

When to Ask for Feedback?

Feedback is valuable at any stage of your writing process, from brainstorming to final drafts.

Consider asking for it when you question:

- Do I understand what the assignment is asking?
- How do I turn my ideas into paper?
- Do my ideas make sense?
- Are my transitions smooth?
- Is my writing clear and effective?

- Does my work meet assignment requirements?
- Can I better structure this information?

Types of Feedback

Your Own Feedback

One of the most powerful tools is self-assessment.

Step away from your paper for a few hours or days and return with a fresh perspective.

This break allows you to spot potential organization issues, transition problems, or grammatical errors that you might have missed.

Feedback from Outside Perspectives

Friends or family members, even those not familiar with your subject, can offer valuable insights.

Talking through your ideas out loud can strengthen understanding.

They can help you assess the clarity of your ideas and provide feedback on flow and structure.

Writing Center Peer Tutor Feedback

Writing tutors are trained to help you at any stage of your writing process.

Tutors can help with brainstorming, organizing, or editing.

They bring experience from multiple assignments and disciplines.

Professor Feedback

Professors provide the most targeted feedback because they created the assignment.

They clarify expectations, formatting, and discipline-specific conventions.

Interpreting Instructor Feedback

1. Rewrite in Your Own Words

Rephrase the feedback so you fully understand what it's asking.

Putting it in your own words makes revision easier.

2. Answer Instructor Questions

Respond to any questions your professor asks.

Doing so helps you identify areas for improvement you might otherwise miss.

3. Make a Checklist

Turn feedback into actionable tasks.

Prioritize higher-order concerns (organization, thesis, developing ideas) before lower-order concerns (grammar, punctuation, spelling).

- **Example:** If your instructor notes your thesis is unclear, revise it before fixing minor punctuation issues.

4. Refer to the Rubric or Assignment Sheet

Assignment Sheets highlight what instructors value most.

- **Example:** If "Analysis" is worth 20 points and "Grammar" is worth 5, focus more on improving your analysis.

5. Look for Patterns

Tutors and instructors usually focus on a few examples rather than marking every issue.

Use feedback to identify recurring problems and apply solutions to other parts of your paper.

6. Check Topic Sentences

Ensure each topic sentence clearly describes the paragraph's content.

Remove or revise points that do not fit the topic sentence.

Move points, revise sentences, or connect ideas better when needed.

References

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