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10-MINUTE GUIDE

# Giving Feedback

Your 10-Minute Guide to Giving Feedback

This guide looks at how managers can deliver clear and timely feedback.

# Giving feedback is a key part of your role as a manager. But it can be painful – for you, and for your team members!

It can feel more of an unpleasant duty than part of an ongoing conversation, so it's often sidelined or delayed until it's simply ineffective.

In this 10-Minute Guide, we'll look at how to plan your feedback, how to deliver objective comments that people can act on, and how to follow up to ensure change.

Use the 10 tips below to deliver focused and actionable feedback.

## 1. Aim for Change

Before giving feedback, remind yourself why you are doing this. The purpose of giving feedback is to improve performance and engagement. And you won't accomplish this by being vague, unfair or harsh.

Instead, concentrate your comments on what needs to change and what this will achieve. This will help you to keep your feedback objective and positive, and it'll involve your team member in thinking about ways to reach the desired outcome.

See our article on [Expectancy Theory](#) to help to make the link between motivation, effort and outcome.

## 2. Prepare

Be clear about what you want to say. You may not need a script, but you do need structure.

So, look over notes from previous feedback sessions and evaluation meetings, consider what you've observed since, and write down everything that you want to say.

Look for specific examples that illustrate the points you need to make. Avoid words such as "never" and "always" as they're unlikely to be accurate. And avoid subjective and inflammatory words like "bad," as they will weaken your case and get in the way of your main points.

Ideally, base your comments on what you've experienced first hand, so that you're on firm ground.

## 3. Be Timely

Don't leave it too long to address a problem – or to praise. The sooner you respond, the more sense your comments will make, and the easier it will be to have an effective conversation.

For example, if you feed back about a recent task, both parties will likely remember the detail, and your team member can make changes promptly. But delivering the news that there's been a problem all year could leave him or her feeling powerless, embarrassed and resentful, while you struggle with unnecessary frustration.

The exception to this is if the situation involved is highly emotional. Here, wait until everyone has calmed down before you deliver feedback. Be sure to recognize and [manage your own emotions](#), too, so that you don't say something that you regret later.



## 4. Be Regular

You'll need to give feedback as part of the formal performance management process, perhaps once or twice a year. But, informal feedback should be given more often – every week, or even every day, depending on the situation.

In fact, feedback is a process that calls for constant attention. People need to know where they stand, and to be recognized and encouraged for good work, too.

Take a look at our articles [How to Have a Great One-on-One](#) and [How to Deliver On-the-Spot Feedback](#) to help you to strike the right balance between planned and instant feedback.

## 5. Be Clear

An honest but respectful exchange with your team member that results in positive change would be ideal – but you might be dreading the encounter!

You can increase your chances of success by following the principles of a [Savvy Conversation](#)<sup>®</sup>, which include creating a safe space for both parties and building trust, first. Then balance being

candid with engaging the person's interest and showing sensitivity, while maintaining a strong sense of direction.

It's essential that you provide tangible, measurable information in your feedback, about what you've observed and what you want to see in future.

Set goals and make plans to monitor and evaluate progress. Use [SMART](#) goals or the [GROW model](#) to guide people along the path to change.

## 6. Listen

Give your team members time to digest your comments, and to respond. Ask them to provide their perspective – use open questions such as, “What is your reaction to this?” or, “How fairly have I represented that?”

[Listen mindfully](#) to what they say, and encourage them to offer their own suggestions for improvement. This way they have an opportunity to “own” solutions, and they are much more likely to follow through with them.



## 7. Use “I” Statements

Give the feedback from your perspective. This way, you avoid labeling the person, or prompting a defensive reaction.

For example, say, “I was frustrated that you arrived 30 minutes late for work yesterday,” rather than, “You were late again and it’s not good enough.”

## 8. Be Focused

A feedback session should discuss two issues at most. Any more, and you risk leaving your team member dazed and demoralized. If you need to address a number of issues, focus only on the most important ones.

## 9. Be Balanced

A good rule is to start a feedback session with a positive comment, as this puts the other person at ease. It also helps them to understand what success looks like, which can help them to take the right steps next time.

That’s not to say that you must always be positive. There is a place for criticism, but you’ll get much more from people when your approach is forward looking and focused on improvement rather than full of blame.

It can also help to give positive feedback at the end of feedback, otherwise, people can finish feeling despondent. However, be sure not to overdo it. You’ll make the takeaway message, “I’m doing really well,” instead of, “I’m good at communicating with customers, but I need to bring my teamworking to that same level.”

If you need to deliver negative feedback, be sure to do so privately, to protect confidentiality and [dignity](#).

## 10. Follow Up

Remember, the whole purpose of giving feedback is to improve performance and engagement. You need to measure whether or not that is happening, and then make adjustments as you go.

So, be sure to document your conversations, and to monitor what is working and what needs to change.

## Key Points

Feedback is a conversation. You need to know how to give comments, how to listen to responses, and how to manage your and your team members’ emotions.

You can plan and manage it carefully to avoid misunderstandings. Above all, aim to be objective in all that you say and focus on what needs to change.

Giving feedback well is a powerful means of bringing about change, and, in time, it will make your workplace more harmonious and more productive.

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