


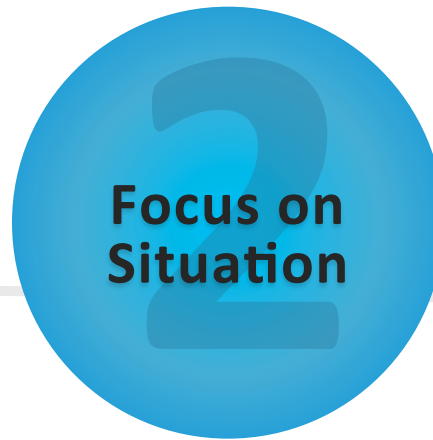
January 2017 

Overview of

# Constructive Feedback



# 6 Steps to Improving Feedback





**Positive comments-  
Improvements-  
Positive summary**

**Give feedback in 3 segments**

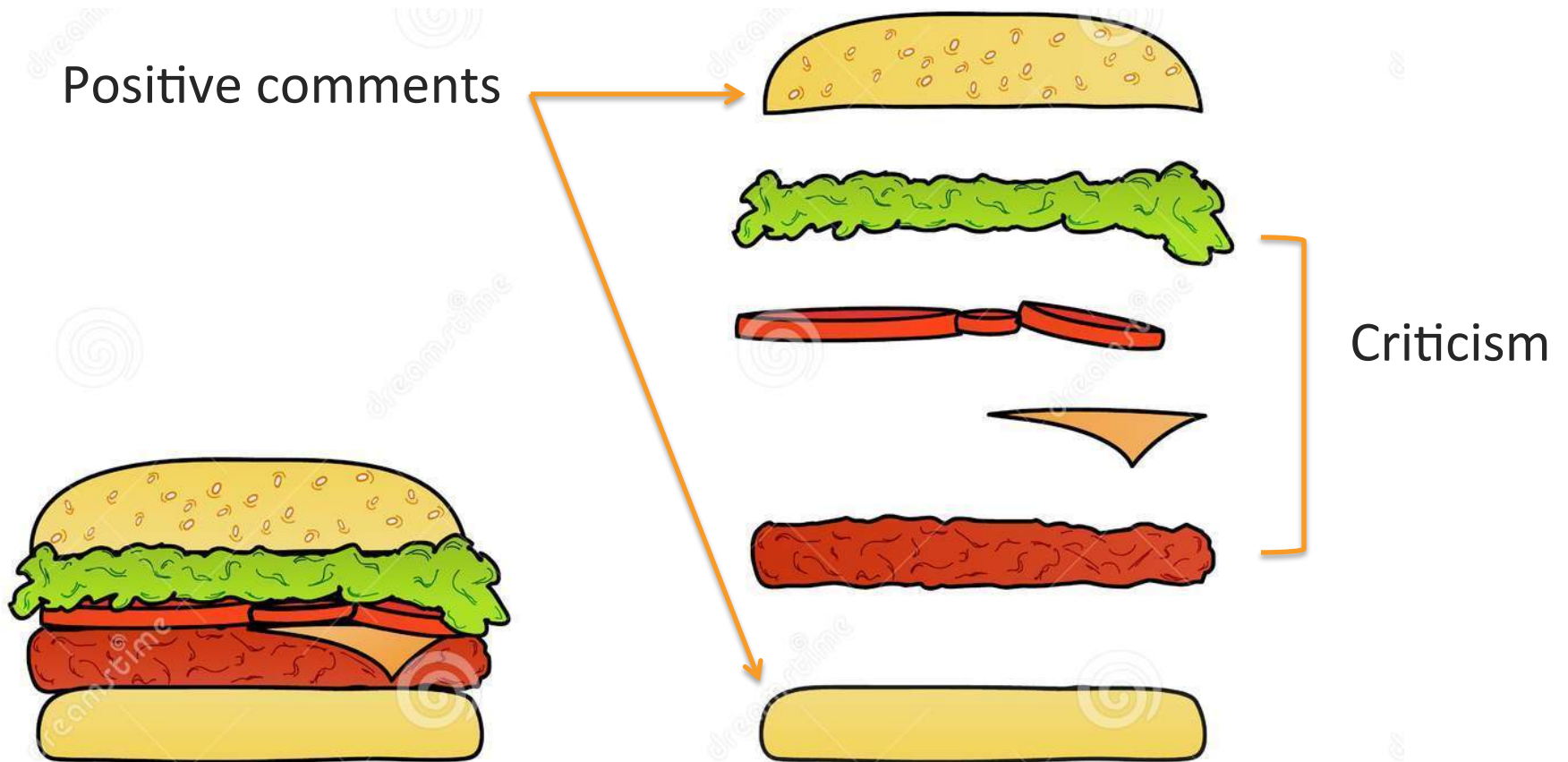
# Positive - Improvement - Positive

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1. Give positive comments about the person's strengths. What did they do right?
2. Provide the constructive criticism
3. Summarize:
  - a. the positive comments again (from #1)
  - b. the positive results the person can expect to see if change is made



# Feedback “sandwich”





## P – I – P Example: Positive #1

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- “I appreciate that you show up for class on time and are eager to participate in class activities and discussions. Your comments show that you are giving a lot of thought to the topics we are covering. For example, you made an excellent point about how advocating for expansion of mental health coverage under Medicare will benefit your future clients.”

## P – I – P Example: Criticism


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- “However, there are several things that I have noticed about your classroom participation that you could improve. First, you dominate the discussions by jumping in when others are sharing. This makes people feel you aren’t really listening to what they are saying. It would be helpful if you let people finish before you comment. Also, show you’re paying attention to what they said by clearly connecting your response to their comment.
- Second, your point is often lost because your stories are long and sometimes seem off topic. Try to pick one main point to make and use examples that are clearly relevant to our discussion.”



## P – I – P Example: Positive summary

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- “Overall, your enthusiasm for understanding this topic shows in your participation. You can make sure your enthusiasm doesn’t crowd out others by not interrupting them, and by intentionally inviting others to participate. If your comments can be briefer and to the point, it will help others, including me, follow your thinking. This will ensure that we can all benefit from your positive contributions.”
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# Focus on the situation, not the person

Less threatening; more receptive

# Focusing on the person can feel INSULTING!

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- Bad example:
  - “Your stories are long and boring. You put everyone to sleep!”
- Good example:
  - “This is a complex topic and sometimes hard to explain briefly, but if you can keep your comments focused, people will understand you better.”



# Separate the person's actions from the person

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- Bad example:
  - “You’re always so negative. People don’t like having you in this class.”
- Good example:
  - “There are times when other students have been hurt by your negative comments. They feel you don’t respect their opinions.”





**Be as specific as possible;  
give examples**



# Vague vs. specific feedback

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- Bad example:
  - “Your written English is not good.” (vague and non-specific)
- Good example:
  - “Your writing would improve if you learn more about verb tense. It is difficult to understand whether you are describing something that already happened or that you hope will happen in the future.” (specific)



## Give specific examples for each item

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- “You dominate the discussions by jumping in when others are sharing. For example, yesterday in class you cut off John when he was explaining why he selected the group activity. Cutting off people makes them feel you aren’t really listening to what they are saying. It would be helpful if you let people finish before you comment.”



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Focus on What  
Can Be  
Controlled

**Give feedback about things  
the person can do  
something about, not things  
outside of their control.**

# Feedback on “controllable” issue

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- Bad example:
  - “Your K-12 education did not prepare you well for college-level work.”
- Good example:
  - “You told me that you didn’t have access to clear communication during your World History class in high school and this caused gaps in what you know. But for my class now, you need to catch up on the global consequences of World Wars I and II.”



**Give recommendations  
for how to improve**

# Recommendations are useful

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- Giving recommendations helps clarify what you want to see happen.
- Giving recommendations communicates that you are asking for action.





# Guidelines for recommendations

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- Be specific with your suggestions
- Briefly explain the reason behind the recommendation



# Recommendation example

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- Bad example:
  - “The presentation is too long. Make it shorter.”
- Good example:
  - “For each point, you gave 2 or 3 examples. This takes away from your main message. Instead, you should give 1 example for each point. This way your message is more to-the-point and makes a stronger impact. By reducing your examples, the presentation length will be shortened.”





**Beware of  
assumptions!**



# Beware of assumptions!

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- Do not assume you know why someone is doing or feeling a certain way.
- Do not assume your opinion is the only valid one.
- Do not assume you have all the answers.
- Do not assume the person will be open to your feedback.



# Avoid assuming about what's causing the situation

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- “You were nervous during your presentation because you aren’t comfortable using ASL.”
  - *Assumption and maybe not true*
- “You appeared nervous during your presentation. You lost your place several times and didn’t make eye contact. Did you feel nervous? Why?”
  - *Describes an observation and asks for more info*





# Avoid assuming that your opinion is the only one

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- “Your paper just isn’t college-level work.”
  - *Assumes no one would consider the paper “college-level”*
- “Your paper doesn’t match my expectations for this course.”
  - *Clearly shows that the expectations are mine and subjective.*



# Avoid assuming you know how to solve everything

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- “Your math will improve if you get tutoring.”
  - *Perhaps this is true; perhaps not.*
- “In my experience, students often benefit from getting tutoring in math. Have you had math tutoring before? Was it helpful for you? Are there other ideas you have to help you improve?”
  - *Provides suggestions based on experience and encourages other possibilities*

# Avoid assuming we have all the control

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- We have limited control about how the feedback is received.
  - You can control how the feedback is delivered
- We have limited control about whether the person acts on the feedback.
  - You can establish consequences of not making improvements



## Now for the hard stuff!

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- Being constructive is often more challenging when the problem is directed at you.
  - Avoid being defensive
  - Avoid blaming
  - Validate the student's perspective



# Remember the 6 steps...

