



Better Feedback in the Social Science Classroom

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Effective feedback is an essential component of the learning process, moving students forward in their learning by helping them understand their progress and recognize areas for improvement. Effective feedback is constructive, with a goal beyond grades, fostering student growth and engagement.

No matter the discipline or assignment, effective feedback has certain characteristics: it is specific, actionable and timely, focused on improvement, and encourages self-assessment with a growth mindset.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource includes three sections: an overview, exercise, and feedback printable.

OVERVIEW

In this [overview](#), each of the six characteristics of effective feedback is followed by an explanation and examples of how to reframe less effective feedback to make it more effective. The six characteristics are also linked below:

1. [Be Specific](#)
2. [Focus on Improvement](#)
3. [Encourage Self-Assessment](#)
4. [Encourage a Growth Mindset](#)
5. [Make it Actionable](#)
6. [Be Timely](#)

EXERCISE

In the [exercise](#) that follows, brainstorm how to apply these concepts in your own classroom. How might you reframe the verbal or written feedback that you provide? How can you adapt or improve your current practices? What support do you need to implement effective feedback routines in your classroom?

PRINTABLE

Print a [copy of this infographic](#) and post it in your classroom as a reference and reminder.

OVERVIEW

Be Specific

Avoid generic phrases. Instead, provide specific feedback that highlights the strengths of the student's work and areas for improvement. Offer concrete examples as much as possible.

Instead of this...	Try this...
'Good job!' or 'Follow Directions.'	Your slide deck for your presentation on a human rights issue includes what is already being done to solve the problem. But, it is missing ideas for what more can be done to address the problem. Look at your copy of the rubric for the assignment and check off that you have included all the required elements.

Focus on Improvement

Keep the focus of your feedback on what can be improved, rather than solely pointing out errors. Giving constructive feedback allows students to recognize opportunities to move forward with their work.

Instead of this...	Try this...
'Quotation needs to support the claim'	The quotation you included as evidence for your argument about the US involvement in the Vietnam War is a strong choice. But I don't see an explanation of <i>how</i> the quotation supports the claim. What key words and ideas in the quotation support your claim? Tell me how the information proves your point.

Encourage Self-Assessment

Use your feedback as a platform for fostering self-reflection. Where possible, incorporate questions that prompt students to evaluate their progress and derive their own assessment of their work. (Help students learn how to move forward when they receive feedback with our [Feedforward Strategies](#) resource.)

Instead of this...	Try this...
'It's clear you didn't read the article.'	Think about the reading strategies we've practiced together during class: did you use any of those strategies when you read the article, before you wrote the summary? Take another look at the article and try one out. For example, as you read, highlight or make note of the "who, what, where, when, and how." Go back to your summary - how did that process change what you would include in the summary?

Encourage a Growth Mindset

Frame your feedback as a tool for growth rather than only evaluation. Incorporate specific examples where the student has demonstrated progress or improvement. (Help your students evaluate their mindsets with our [Four Corners Growth Mindset Evaluation](#).)

Instead of this...	Try this...
'No eye contact, voice barely audible during practice presentation'	I noticed that you struggled to make eye contact and engage with the class during your presentation. We've talked before about how you prefer writing over speaking to a group, but I know that presenting is a skill that you can practice and continue to grow confident in. I have some tips and tricks you can use. How about I set you up with a practice session with a peer before the final presentation of the year?

Make it Actionable

Provide actionable suggestions that provide clear guidance for students on how to improve their work. Break down your feedback into specific steps or strategies that students can use so they will have a clear understanding of what you are asking them to do.

Instead of this...	Try this...
"Notes format is incorrect, missing information."	Go back to your research paper assignment sheet and find the guidelines for your research notes. Review each of your note cards and make sure you've included the following for each: the source with a correct citation and whether it's a direct quotation or paraphrased information.

Be Timely

Provide timely, high-quality feedback to students as soon as possible. Ensure that students receive feedback before they move on to another assignment requiring the same skills.

Instead of this...	Try this...
Providing feedback after a final draft of a research paper has been turned in	Chunk an assigned research paper into small steps, providing feedback on a claim, research notes, outline, and then an introduction, separate body paragraphs, and conclusion along the way.

EXERCISE

Be Specific	
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Focus on Improvement	
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Encourage Self- Assessment	
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PRINTABLE

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