

Giving & Receiving Feedback



Lesson outline

1. The importance of Feedback
2. Introductory Brainstorming Activity on Giving & Receiving Feedback
3. Tools to know how to structure & receive Feedback
4. Tips per age

1. The importance of feedback

a) Why should you teach students to give and receive feedback?

One of the factors that can make going to school stressful for students is the feeling of being constantly evaluated. They can feel they are evaluated by their teachers, or judged by their peers, and when they come back from school, they are asked to talk about their school day by their parents. If the student feels uncomfortable, this experience can be tiring.

However, if they learn why they receive feedback from their teachers and how to provide constructive feedback to other students, it helps them organize their thoughts and get into a more positive mindset about school.

To give a more practical example: when students receive a low grade, they may feel that they themselves are stupid. It can be difficult for them to understand that the teacher did not judge their intelligence but evaluated how they succeeded in a given test. If students learn how to take and receive feedback in a positive way, they are more likely to feel confident and to improve.

It is equally important for students to learn how to give feedback and express themselves in a constructive and positive way. In all group activities at school, students are already evaluating or judging one another. Even when they do not mean to be insulting, their spontaneous expressions can hurt other students without them even realizing it. This is why, in a similar way that developing student's empathy is useful, it is important to teach them how to give feedback.

b) Teaching feedback is important for the development of oral skills

Teaching students how to give feedback is essential in teaching them oral expression, especially for children with learning disorders. As we have seen, speaking in front of a group can be intimidating, and students who already have challenges at school can be even more stressed if they are unsure about the other students' attitude. For example, they can feel judged by the students and teacher, whether they are staring silently at them, taking notes or daydreaming.

Encouraging constructive feedback is beneficial to the whole group: not only does the student who speaks know what to improve, but it also invites other students to look at the positive aspects of the others' presentations. This can create a virtuous circle in which students get into the habit of supporting one another and expressing themselves calmly and positively.

2. Introductory brainstorming activity on giving and receiving feedback

a) Using the circle setting

You can start the class on feedback by allowing the students to brainstorm in a circle setting.

Sitting in a circle gives a feeling of equality and provides a positive environment for students to speak their minds. Being singled out by standing up or in front of the classroom can be an unsettling experience for students. Being in the spotlight is not comfortable for everyone. Therefore, to foster dialogue and participation from all students, move the chairs and have the students sitting in a circle.

Use this opportunity to introduce the topic of the day.

b) Think about examples of giving and receiving feedback in real life

Feedback and evaluation do not only happen at school. It can take place at work, from hierarchy, colleagues or clients, in a sports club, from trainers and teammates, or even in the family and friends sphere. We give and receive feedback in almost every situation. Therefore, to make sure that students realize that knowing how to give and receive constructive feedback is not only useful at school, you can start the session by allowing them to brainstorm examples of giving and receiving feedback in real life.

In terms of setting, depending on your class and on the time you have, you can use these two options:

- Option 1: have the students sit in a circle and brainstorm with all of them on examples of feedback in real life,
- Option 2: divide the class into small groups and provide each group with a situation or environment where one can receive feedback, such as: work, family, friends, sports, school, etc. For younger children, do not hesitate to offer them with specific settings (example: instead of “work”, say “working at a bakery”).

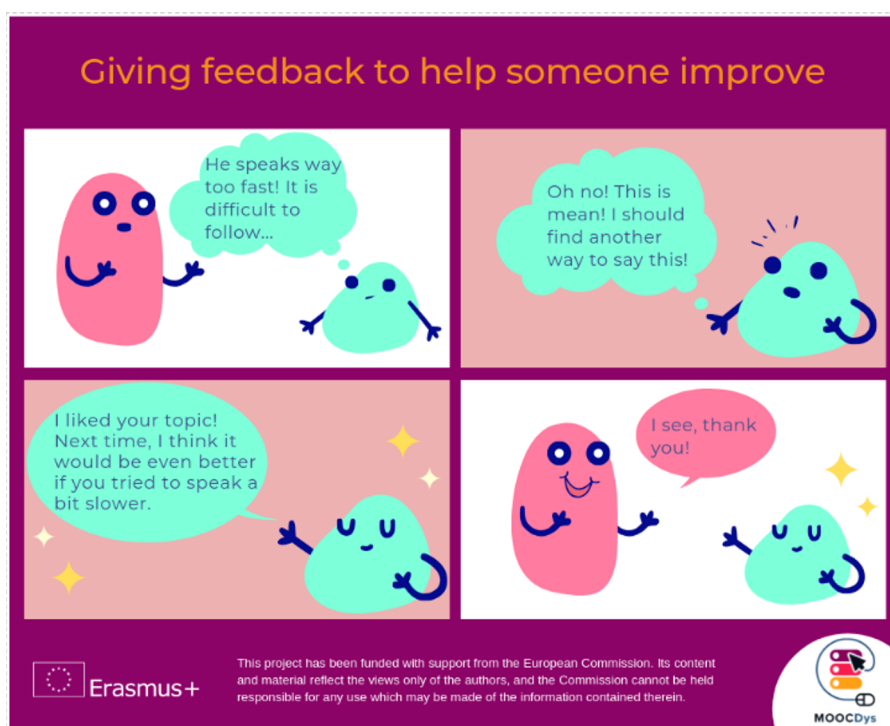
3. Tools to know how to structure and receive feedback

a) Group reflection on feedback at school

Now that you have introduced the topic, you can offer the group to reflect upon the following question: “how do I feel when I receive feedback at school?”. You can ask students how they feel when they receive feedback and comments from a teacher or from classmates in different classes, including sports classes as they provide more opportunity for students to speak to one another.

After you have gathered the first thoughts, ask “why do you think people give you feedback?”. Here, the goal is to make students realize that the point of feedback is to help the person that is evaluated to improve. This will help students understand the difference between being judged and receiving constructive advice.

To foster dialogue, you can provide the students with this comic strip. It shows a student (the pink character) giving a presentation. The green character thinks the first character is too fast which makes it difficult to follow, but they want to give useful positive advice to help the pink character improve.



Give your students enough time to read it. You can ask question such as:

- What do you think about this story?
- Is the green character being to nice?
- If you were the pink character, what would you prefer to be told? Why?
- When you give feedback to another student, do you think it might make them feel bad?
- What do you think is the goal of the green character in saying this to the pink character?

b) Introducing the difference between criticism and feedback

During the previous activity, you might notice that negative feelings might be expressed. After all, it is not easy to make the difference between criticism, which has the negative purpose of making someone feel bad about what they did, and feedback, which aims at making them improve.

You can read the following chart with your students. It shows students how they should take feedback rather than feeling that they are being criticized.

CRITICISM VERSUS FEEDBACK		
		
This person is picking on me.	This person cares about me. They are trying to help me.	
This person thinks I am bad at this.	This person gives me advice because they must believe I can improve.	
I am angry, I feel embarrassed.	I am thankful this person is telling me how I can do better.	
I want to give up. I will never be able to do this as good as this person wants me to.	I will do my best to do the things this person suggests. I will see if it helps me to improve.	

c) Learning how to structure feedback thanks to acting out a text

You will now give students the opportunity to learn how to structure their feedback by evaluating an oral expression activity. Depending on the group dynamic or students' level, you can use one of the following options:

- Option 1: the teacher reads short pieces of poetry or text
- Option 2: the students act out a scene as small groups (eg “buying bread at a bakery”, or performing a scene from a play)
- Option 3: a few students read a short piece of a novel and try to use the appropriate tone.

Introduce the selected activity to the class and write the goals of the exercise on the blackboard. Then, introduce the feedback form below. It helps reminds them to write what they liked in someone else's performance, and to formulate what they think they could improve.


FEEDBACK FORM

Your classmate has just given a presentation. Write what you like about their presentation. Then, write what you think they could improve next time.

DATE: _____ Your name: _____ Your classmate's name: _____

1. I LIKED THAT...

2. NEXT TIME, I THINK YOU COULD IMPROVE...

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This is also a good exercise in conjunction with working on empathy. Invite the students to read what they wrote in front of the whole class. It will allow you to correct any harsh comment, or to advise to formulate advices in a nicer way.

c) Teaching the next level of feedback

Once the students have started giving feedback and are getting used to the exercise, you can move on to giving them a more developed template of the things to keep in mind when giving feedback.

FEEDBACK CHECKLIST

Here is a list to help you give positive feedback.
Add other items if you want to!

☐

I want to help the other person improve.

☐

I am not judging them. I give advice on their speech.

☐

I do not forget to congratulate the others on their efforts.

☐

I express my own opinion: "In think that...", "in my opinion..."

☐

I do not say what is wrong, I focus on what could be improved.

☐


I do not forget to be nice.

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4. Tips per age

Age	Tips
6-8	For younger children, focus on feedback in daily life situations and on being nice when giving feedback. Start introducing the fact that when a student receives feedback, it is only their work that is evaluated, not themselves.
8-10	Compared to students aged 6-8, you can encourage students aged 8-10 to give feedback regularly to their peers. Ask them what they think about the process and encourage a positive phrasing in order to foster a virtuous circle.
10-12	This age range can be challenging in terms of self-esteem and attitude regarding using oral skills in class. Cultivate a positive learning and expression environment by diving deeper into the notions attached to feedback.
12-14	With students aged 12-14, you can encourage students to use the feedback form in all classes. It can help them structure their thoughts and work on formulating constructive feedback.
14-16	For students this age, you can encourage students to think into more details about giving and receiving feedback in real life by providing work life examples.