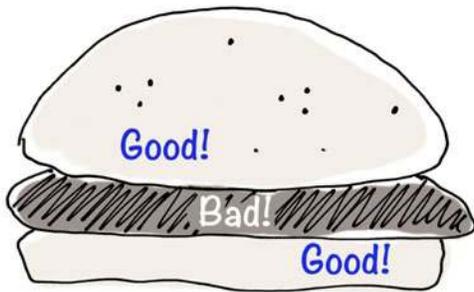


Get students to give feedback beyond “good job”

When students are asked to post and comment to a discussion forum or to participate in peer review, you'll often see comments that are far from inspiring. Comments are made that don't encourage the post originator to review, reflect and improve. The feedback is not helpful or constructive in a way that causes reconsideration of one's stance. Comments like “good job,” “I like your argument,” “well said” or other quick responses that contain no follow-up or substance can demonstrate lack of critical thinking.



Often students practice the “feedback sandwich approach” which they might have learned in K-12. This is a good base, but needs to be built upon in our academic setting. So how do you get students to provide good feedback to classmates? What value do you place on seeing constructive and helpful comments? Why are you asking them to participate in the first place -- what is your expected outcome?

GIVE EXAMPLES

Providing examples is a good way to demonstrate your expectations to students. Some instructors provide an example of what good feedback looks like and what poor or unsubstantial feedback looks like. Sharing examples can help set a standard. Choose examples that you've written, were created by students in past classes (with their permission, of course) or point out good feedback given by a current student.

PROVIDE GUIDANCE

Some students may find it uncomfortable giving feedback especially when exploring an issue for the first time. Encourage students to

- ask questions to help clarify wording that isn't clear or to get more specific information from the writer of post

- communicate an explanation along with “why” or “why not” the student agrees or disagrees with the argument
- provide supporting examples whether it be from the class readings, alternate resources or personal experiences
- reference back to one's own post or to other student's posts to help tie together the conversation
- use your discussion criteria not only for the original post but also as a prompt for giving feedback
- if you use a discussion forum rubric, remind student to use it for their own evaluation and to help formulate their own responses back to their peers

SET AN EXAMPLE

As you set the tone of the discussion forum for your class or when making comments on assignments, remember to ask: Are you modeling good feedback techniques in your own behavior? Are you giving constructive feedback that supports and pushes students to do better? This video called “Beyond the Red Ink: Teacher's Comments through Student's Eyes” is a good reminder that your students deserve and expect your time and consideration in getting constructive feedback on their coursework. The video documents several students' impressions about constructive feedback like what it means and how it is often missing. It also talks about the value of constructive feedback for students who are attempting to grow their skills and to be pushed towards (or into) the next academic level of understanding.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

What's your strategy for encouraging good feedback from students? Please share your experiences for the benefit of our teaching and learning community.

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