

# Receiving & learning from peer-feedback

Receiving feedback can be a delicate matter. It's not easy to strike the balance between valuing the others' input and evaluating its usefulness for your writing.

## Do's and don'ts

To be able to do that, you need to emotionally distance yourself from the process. It helps to take a moment to deliberately switch to a professional attitude when receiving peer-feedback. If you do find yourself becoming defensive or insecure, take some time to let those feelings go, so you can return to constructive work.

Peer-feedback is a form of team-work with the aim to help you. This works best if you listen openly and communicate well with your peer. To get the most out of the process, you can already take measures when you submit your writing in the first place: make sure you have done all you can to improve your text and possibly

indicate on what aspects you still need help with. You can do this via highlighting, comments or a list of questions. This helps both your peer and you to concentrate efforts on helpful feedback. However, your peer will also see things you may not see, so keep an open mind and take any feedback into careful consideration. Even if you receive positive feedback, try to remain critical and consider whether specific parts of your assignment still need some improvements.

This table sums up some do's and don'ts of receiving peer-feedback that might be helpful.

DO'S	TIPS
Interpret feedback in reference to your product, not to you personally.	"You need to find stronger arguments for point X" means: "arguments for point X aren't good enough", rather than "your argumentation skills aren't good enough"
Take time to step back and let the feedback sink in.	Digesting feedback takes time. After you've read through all of it, do something else for a while or sleep over it, then return with a fresh view.
Make sure you understand the feedback you get.	Feedback can be vague, or otherwise hard to work with, for instance "this paragraph isn't making sense". If you're not sure, keep asking for explanation until you find the feedback helpful.
Realize when feedback is not helpful for improving the quality of your writing.	All feedback is subjective. If you decide to reject a point of criticism, make sure to do this in a respectful way and explain your motivations. This shows your appreciation for your peer's efforts and can also build confidence in your writing.
Incorporate feedback strategically, working your way from big- to small-impact changes.	Turn to structural and content-related issues first ("re-organize these paragraphs"), then to the fine-tuning, ("this sentence needs shortening").
DONT'S	TIPS
Avoid ignoring or harshly criticizing feedback.	Instead of ignoring feedback, you could say "I don't know how to incorporate this. Can you give me a suggestion?". Instead of "This comment doesn't make sense", you could say: "I don't know what you mean here, can you elaborate?"
Don't give up when you receive overwhelming feedback.	Instead of thinking "I might as well start over, or just leave everything as it is", turn to your peer: "I don't know where to start. Can you give me an indication of priorities to your comments?"
Don't hold on to what holds you back.	Sometimes you have to kill your darlings. Why not collect them in a separate doc for later use?

