

**Academic Success Center
Thomas Jefferson University
East Falls Campus**

How to Benefit from Your Professor's Feedback

- 1.) Embrace the feedback.** Even though feedback can be difficult to accept, doing so will help you grow as a writer. Whether you received marginal notes containing questions and comments, or small marks indicating grammar corrections, welcome all of it. Feedback can be used to revise not only specific papers, but also help you think about how to improve future papers in other classes, as long as you see feedback as an opportunity to develop your writing skills and take ownership of your writing.

 - *Don't be afraid if your paper has many markings on it. This means that your instructor spent his or her time giving you thoughtful feedback. On the other hand, if the feedback is sparse, this doesn't mean that your instructor doesn't care. Some instructors write more comments while others might be focused on other aspects of the course. Regardless of the amount of feedback, learn as much as you can from it.*

- 2.) Read *all* the feedback.** Your professor's comments can help you see all the different parts that were evaluated in your assignment. Knowing these components will not only help you understand the grade you received, but also highlight your specific strengths and weaknesses. Reading feedback on grammar issues or important academic writing concepts such as claim, support, and organization will not only "help you see patterns of errors in your writing [but also] improve your writing for future papers and for other classes" (The Writing Center 2018).

 - *Remember that feedback should be seen holistically, rather than focusing on each section separately. The context of the entire paper should be considered when reading the feedback.*

- 3.) Ask for clarification about the feedback.** This is especially important if you don't understand some of the words your professor used or can't decipher their handwriting. Either ask your instructor directly or talk with an outside reader, like tutors in the Academic Success Center. Typically, feedback on academic writing has four functions: to inform, guide, develop understanding, and explore different perspectives (Weimer 2017). Talking with your instructor or with a tutor will help you understand the purpose behind the feedback and how to use it most effectively.

 - *An added bonus of asking for clarification from your professor is that it helps you foster a good relationship with them. You are showing your professor that you value their perspective and the time they spent providing you with feedback.*

4.) See the positive in the feedback. Instead of overgeneralizing all feedback as negative, see if the comment is actually a type of positive feedback: appreciation, coaching, and evaluation (LeVan & King 2016).

Three types of positive feedback

- a.) “Feedback as appreciation” refers to comments that aim “to see and to acknowledge” (LeVan & King 2016). This type of feedback occurs when an instructor recognizes your effort. Some phrases your professor might use include “Good job...” or “Good start...”
- b.) “Feedback as coaching” refers to comments that help you “fine-tune skills, tweak understanding, [and] increase knowledge...” (LeVan & King 2016). This type of feedback occurs when an instructor not only identifies your writing’s weaknesses, but also explains *why* those aspects of your writing were inaccurate or underdeveloped. For example, a professor might comment that your thesis is underdeveloped because it doesn’t have a clear stance and strong reasons.
- c.) “Feedback as evaluation” refers to comments that are designed “to shape decision-making” (LeVan & King 2016). This type of feedback occurs when an instructor encourages you to create a revision plan. Typically, your professor will highlight the most important issues in your paper, such as structure and evidence. You can then turn this feedback into a revision checklist, ensuring that you revise in a holistic manner, i.e. work on the entire paper and not just individual parts of the essay.

If you remember to embrace the feedback, read all of it, ask for clarification, and see the positive in it, you will be able to “move past [your] gut reaction” (LeVan & King 2016), which will empower you to engage in an effective revision process.

References

LeVan, K.S., and King, M.E. (2016). Teaching students how to manage feedback. *Faculty Focus: Higher Ed Teaching & Learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.facultyfoucs.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/teaching=-students-manage-feedback/>

Weimer, M. (2017). How students perceive feedback. *Faculty Focus: Higher Ed Teaching & Learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/students-perceive-feedback/>

The Writing Center (2018). Getting feedback. *The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*. Retrieved from <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/getting-feedback/>