

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white rectangular card. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger gripping the card. The background is a solid, clear blue sky. The card contains text in two lines: the first line is in bold black font, and the second line is in blue font.

CS2101 Effective Communication for Computing Professionals

Peer feedback skills, Q&A skills

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session, you will have learned

- the SBI method for giving constructive feedback
- the different types of questions you may ask in a Q&A session
- strategies for handling questions during Q&A sessions



**GIVING AND
RECEIVING
THE GIFT OF
FEEDBACK**

Peer review/feedback is common in many fields:

- Engineering – software, technical peer reviews; environmental assessments
- Health care – physician, nursing, dentistry peer reviews
- Accounting
- Law
- Aviation
- Forest fire management
- Teaching
- Research
- Most supervisory positions



In software development...

Codacy surveyed **680** companies on their code quality and code review practices. Here's one of their findings.

We spend a significant amount of time reviewing code. In fact on average, we spend **5 hours per week reviewing code or 12.5% of our week looking at code.**



C O D A C Y

Source: <https://www.codacy.com/blog/10-facts-about-code-reviews-and-quality/>

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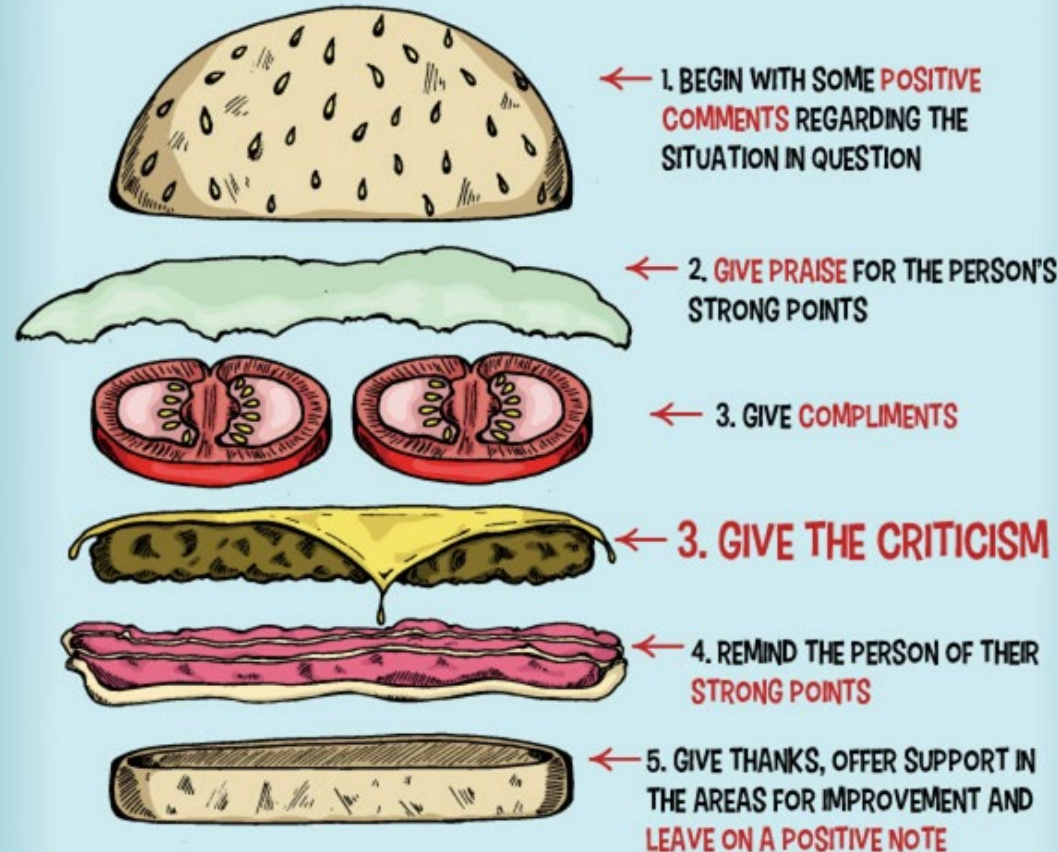
Criteria for effective feedback

1. The feedback provider is credible and trusted by the recipient.
2. The feedback is conveyed with good intentions.
3. The feedback is given in an interactive (*would you consider...*) manner, instead of a prescriptive (*you should*) manner.
4. The feedback message is specific, clear and evidence-based.
5. The feedback is helpful to the recipient.

How do you convey all these with your communication skills?

How to give a.....
**CONSTRUCTIVE
CRITICISM
SANDWICH**

The **TASTIEST** way
to give a team
member feedback!



The sandwich
method

SBI

[Click to view video](#)

The SBI method

The SBI method - example

- **Situation**

- During your segment...

- **Behaviour**

- I saw that you made it a point to stand close to the audience, instead of near the white board.

- **Impact**

- I thought this helped you come across as more approachable and friendly.

- **Situation**

- In the introduction...

- **Behaviour**

- you approached several individuals to ask them a question. (state observation, without judgment)

- **Impact**

- I thought this was an interesting way to engage the audience. *Maybe it's just me*, but I was *somewhat* uncomfortable when you approached me and stood very close to me.

- **Suggestion**

- *Perhaps* it may have been less scary if there was *maybe* an arm's length distance...

Guidelines for effective feedback

1. Focus on the behavior, not the person.
 - Instead of *You were boring*, say *I was thinking perhaps the example could be a bit more interesting, such as...*
2. Convey care and encouragement with your tone of voice and choice of words.
 - Use *you* when conveying positive feedback; eg *You did X really well!*
 - Use *I* to convey your reactions when highlighting an area of concern; *I was slightly lost when the queen bee example came up. I wasn't sure how it was related to the concept of...*
3. Use positive body language
 - Maintain eye contact, lean forward to show interest (leaning backwards shows aloofness), tilt head slightly forward or sideways to convey thought (head tilted back conveys judgmental vibe)
4. Use softeners like *I was thinking/wondering, I thought, perhaps, might be, quite...*
 - Instead of *The example was not relevant. You should...*, try *The example didn't seem quite relevant to me. Perhaps consider...*
5. Use *and* instead of *but*
 - Instead of *You were really great at X, but when you do Y...*, try *You were really good at X, and if you (keep working on) Y, you'll sound even better.*

Useful phrases for giving feedback



- When you did X, I felt Y.
- I noticed that when you said X, it made me feel Y.
- I really liked the way you did X and particularly Y about it.
- It made me feel really X to hear you say Y in that way.

Useful phrases for giving suggestions



- One thing that could make this even better is...
- I was thinking that I would really like it if...
- I was wondering if you might consider...
- Would you consider...

Responding to feedback



Do not take it personally.

- The feedback giver is entitled to his/her opinion.
- This is one person's feedback. There may or may not be others who think the same way.
- Ultimately, you have the right to decide whether there is merit in the feedback, and whether you want to or can act upon the feedback, or to dismiss it.

1. Thank the feedback giver.
2. Ask for clarification, examples, suggestions, if necessary. Use a "seek-to-understand" tone", and beware of unintentionally conveying a challenging or defensive tone.
3. It is not always necessary to explain or defend yourself.
4. Reflect on the feedback given to you.
5. If there's something you can do about it, do it. Research to find out your options, if necessary.
6. If there's nothing you can do about it, dismiss it and move on.

Clarifying or Asking for (further) feedback

Remember: You can control how much you get out of your interactions.

If you want more feedback, you should ask for it.

Here're some useful phrases:

- How do you think I could do ... better?
- What would you like me to have done differently?
- Can you give me an example of how I could have handled that better?
- Why do you think I keep having this issue and how could I improve things?
- What is your opinion on the way I handled that question from Z?
- How would you approach this if you were me?
- So, when you said..., would it be fair to say that you meant... and felt...?
- How I understood you correctly when I did... you felt...?







Consider this...

- View questions as an opportunity for you to **share** what you know, not as an attack on you.
- Similarly, when asking questions, adopt a “**seeking to understand/learn**” tone and body language.
- If audience does not initiate questions, you may initiate with one of your own “prepared” questions and answers. Eg *“A common question people have is..., Many people at this point are worried that...”*

Types of questions (1)

Questions that seek clarification	Questions about viewpoints and perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you mean by...?• Is this your main point?• Could you put it another way?• Why did you say that...?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does this benefit the [stakeholder]?• Would the [stakeholder] think that...?• Who benefits from this? What's in it for them?• Why is it better than...?
Questions that probe assumptions	Questions that probe implications and consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you assuming that...?• What are you assumptions about...?• Is this always the case?• Does your reasoning depend on...?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you say... are you implying?• But, if that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?• What are the implications of that?• So... how does this...?
Questions that probe reasons and evidence	Questions about the question/problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would we know/do we find out/determine if it is...?• Why do you think that is...?• What evidence are you basing that on?• Do you have any evidence for...?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why is this issue/problem important?• How can we find out?• Are there other questions we need to ask? Other (more pertinent) problems we need to address?• Can we break the question down a bit?

Types of questions (2)

Questions about idea conception	Questions about the software
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did u come up with this idea / name?• Who are your target users?• Why this group of users?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why command line interface?• Why PC instead of smartphone platform?• How does this solve/address the problem of... that you mentioned earlier?• What are your plans for the beta version / version 2.0?
Questions about competitive advantage	Questions about the team
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is this idea/version different from...?• What is your competitive advantage / unique selling point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your strength / expertise / experience in this area?• What qualities are you looking for in your team members?• What do you expect your team members to bring to the table?• How do you plan to allocate work among the team members?• Seems like this requires... [additional] knowledge/skill. How confident are you...?

The key to handling questions effectively is...

You **MUST** know your stuff

- Read widely around your topic as you are preparing for your presentation.
- Know your team members' content, and how their content fit in with yours.
- Anticipate questions and prepare your answers.




Tip #1: Take control

TAKING CONTROL

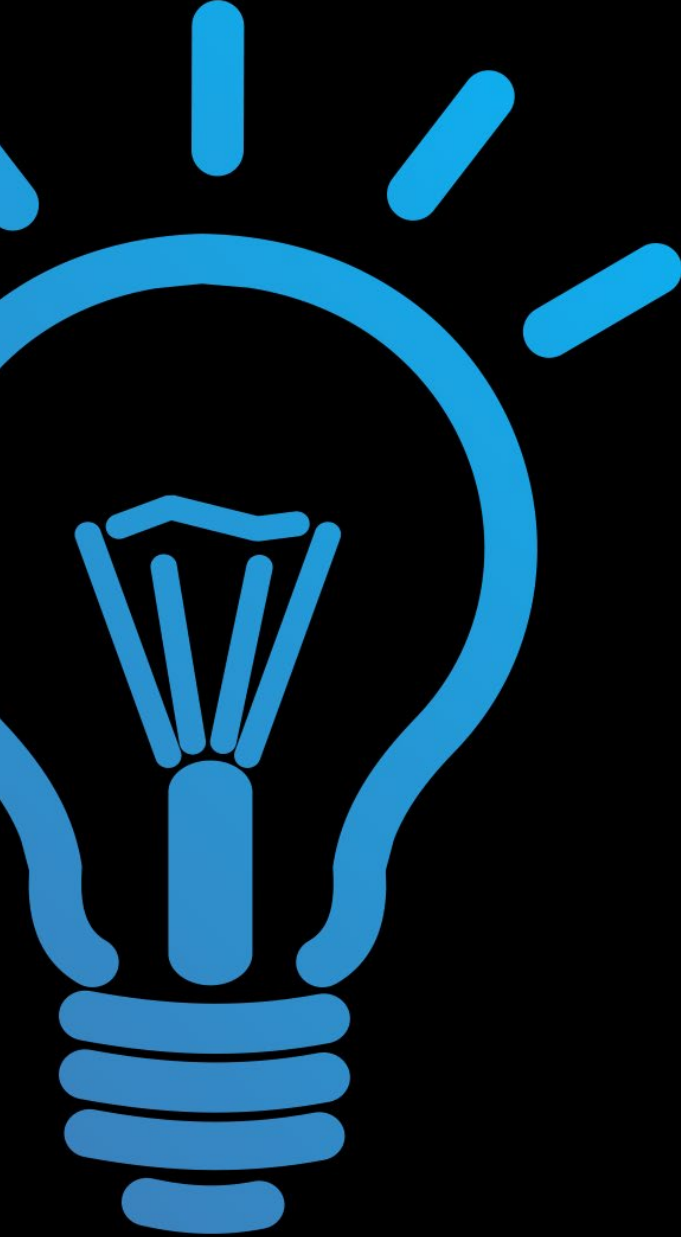


1. YOU define the topics for Q&A:
 - *Have you any questions **on the four principles I've outlined?***
2. Decline to answer questions that fall outside the perimeters of your talk:
 - *I'm afraid that really falls outside of my objectives for today's presentation. Perhaps we can resume discussion of that particular point later?*
3. Don't be afraid to admit you do not have some info; offer what you do have
E.g.
Q: What kind of impact is your enhancement expected to have on the **profit margin**?
A: **I don't have the answer to that right now; the marketing team will have to get back to you with the math. But what I do know right now is** that similar apps that offer this feature are selling for twice the price of our app. **What this means is** people are willing to pay for this feature.

A close-up photograph of a person's ear and hand. The person has dark hair and is wearing a small, dark, rectangular earring. Their hand is raised near their ear, with fingers slightly curled. The background is a solid blue color.

Tip #2: Listen for and understand the question

1. Listen to the full question before you start responding
 - Questions can change direction at the last moment, particularly if the questioner is thinking on her/his feet. This can throw you if you have already started to leaf through your material for the 'appropriate' response.
 - Questioners often try to make a point while asking their question; eg *"Surely a more meaningful interpretation of X is that it?"*
2. Decipher the questioner's intention
 - Don't be fazed by the **tone**, **acknowledge validity of questioner's concerns**, **reframe question objectively**, and **respond**.
 - Eg:
 - Q: It seems to me that this app **makes it more difficult** for people to submit a claim.
 - A: **That's an excellent observation. You're worried about how much extra time is needed to submit a claim.** First-time users may find the extra steps time-consuming because they're unfamiliar with the process, but once you get the hang of it, you can easily get it done in just a couple of taps. The good thing is, it saves you time from having to track back and re-submit the claim later, which is what's happening now without this enhancement.



Other helpful tips

- When answering questions, also make eye contact with the rest of the audience. Avoid one-to-one discussions with the questioner.
- Keep answers short and concise; 2-4 sentences. Avoid making another mini presentation.
 - If questioner persists with questions, assert your position calmly: *I'm afraid we need to move on now. I'd be happy to take this up with you after the end of the presentation... Next question, please?*
- Use the **Point – Reason – Explanation – Point** structure, or any other relevant structure.
- Own your project/presentation/ideas. Avoid blaming others; eg “This actually wasn’t my idea...”.
 - If there is truth in the comment, thank and acknowledge the questioner: *Thank you, that’s a good observation. We certainly hadn’t thought of that. We’ll need to work on that a little bit more. Thank you for pointing that out... Next question, please?*
 - If you need to rebut, make it short and polite: *You’re right; the examples do seem rather contrived. But the point is that they are used to illustrate a very real communication problem, and strategies to address such problems. We’ll probably need to use less contrived examples next time. Thank you... Next question, please?*

Find out more!



- 8 Ways to Handle Tough Q&A Sessions During Presentations

<https://visme.co/blog/questions-and-answer-session/#AsJ47V909ogq1syV.99>

- Handling Difficult Questions During a Presentation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wN6LdGS-to>

- How to Handle Questions from Audience

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ha1efqW-4h0>