

Giving constructive criticism

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_4042X_EN

LANGUAGE
English

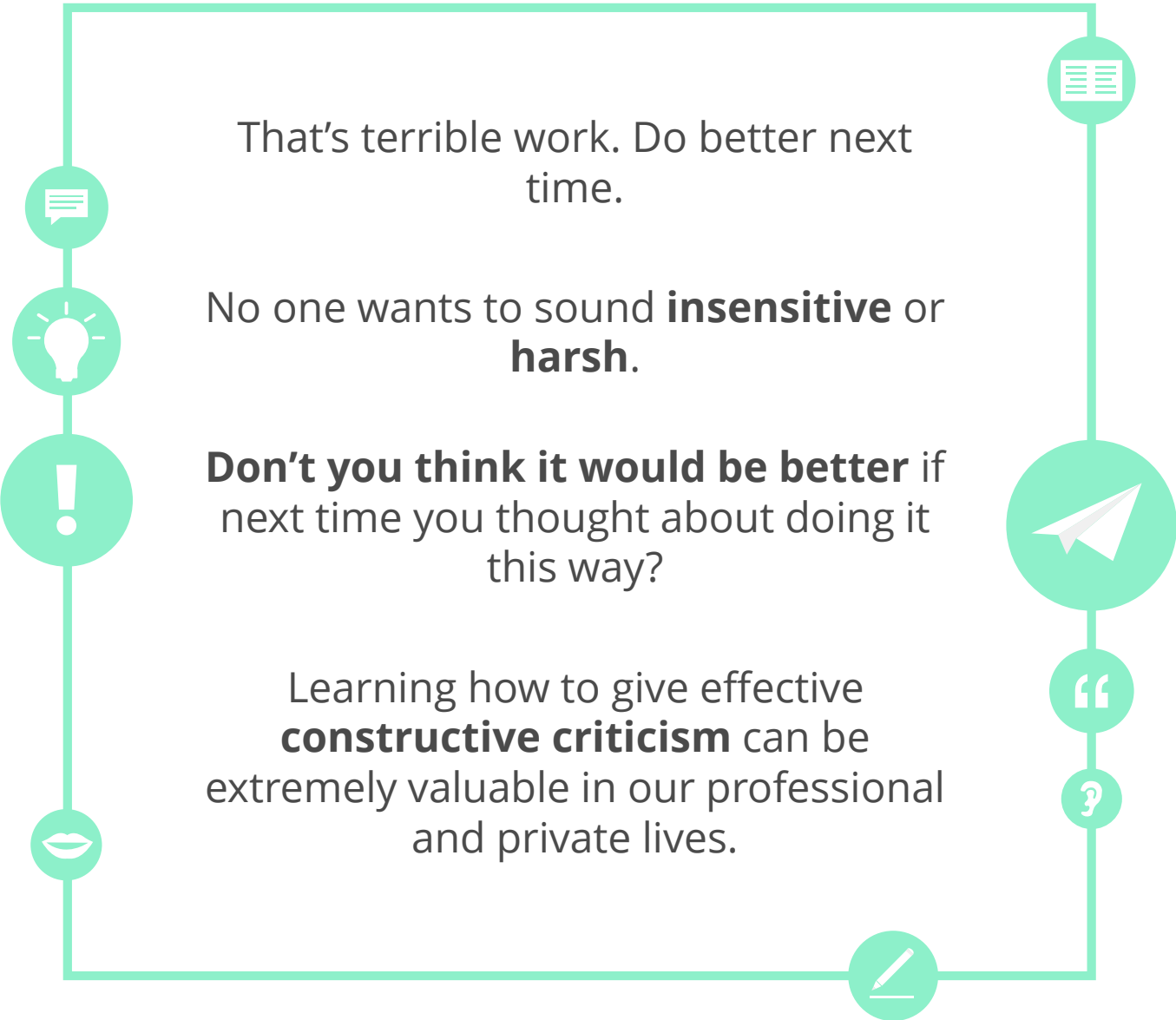




Goals

- Can recognise and explain the use of some more advanced techniques for giving constructive criticism.
- Can use these phrases to give constructive criticism in a wide range of situations and react appropriately to both constructive and non-constructive criticism.





That's terrible work. Do better next time.

No one wants to sound **insensitive** or **harsh**.

Don't you think it would be better if next time you thought about doing it this way?

Learning how to give effective **constructive criticism** can be extremely valuable in our professional and private lives.



Warm up discussion

What negative impacts might carelessly worded criticism at work have on someone's professional life?

What could be the potential consequences?



might

The modal verb *might* is often used to add more tact to a conversation, making it sound more constructive. Using *might* sounds less direct and more polite.

Consider the examples below.

Next time you **might** like to try giving yourself some more time to complete the task.

Do you think it **might** be better to call David now?

Next time it **might** be more helpful if you dress appropriately.

You **might** want to think about planning that out in advance.



You **might** like to use modal verbs next time you give constructive criticism.



Discuss

How would the following statements make you feel?



That was the most boring presentation I've ever had to sit through. Please don't bother again!

You looked really stupid when you made that mistake.

You really dropped the ball on that one.



Constructive criticism

- **Constructive criticism** is a necessary social skill to succeed in both your professional and private life. It is the **opposite** of **destructive criticism** and identifies the ways that the recipient can improve for next time.
- Constructive criticism **builds up the confidence** of the recipient and assists them in making **positive** changes, preparing them for future success.

Observe the following points to help you hone your **constructive criticism** skills.

- **Address the behaviour**, not the person.
- It is important to be very specific and **isolate the focus** of the criticism. Don't be too broad.
- **Respond positively** and **listen objectively** if you are the recipient – being **open to criticism** shows a maturity and **willingness to improve**.





Constructive criticism

- There are many examples of how we can give good constructive feedback in our professional and private lives. By giving criticism **sensitively**, the recipient can **take on board the comments** and **not feel offended**. Observe the types of constructive criticism below.
- Remember the number one rule: be **sensitive** to how the recipient may **interpret** your suggestions.

Type of constructive criticism	What it looks like
compliment sandwich	Give a compliment followed by a suggestion, then by another compliment.
building on positives	Begin on common ground, but then suggest alternatives where you disagree.
specific	Avoid broad and vague suggestions that don't add any substance.
actionable	Ensure the feedback is focused on things that can be improved on.
recommendations given	Provide one or many alternatives that the recipient can work on.



Destructive criticism

Can you think of some examples of destructive criticism? Have you ever been on the receiving end of such criticism?



How to be tactful

Discuss the skills you might use
when deploying **tact** and
diplomacy.



Role play

Read aloud the role play below. Pay attention to the language choices.
Do you think Jonah's use of language is constructive?



Jonah: I can't believe you missed the deadline again. You said you could do it.

Alex: I'm really sorry, Jonah. I tried as hard as I could to do everything on time but I really have a lot of tasks to do at the moment.



Jonah: You said last time that you were going to start managing your time better.

How many more times are we going to end up behind schedule because of your disgraceful attitude towards your work? You're such an amateur.

Alex: I don't know what to say, I know I really let the team down... I can tell you are really disappointed with me.





Role play – transformed!

Re-word the role play, transforming the destructive criticism into constructive criticism.



Jonah: _____

Alex: _____



Jonah: _____

Alex: _____





Analysis

Discuss the questions below, taking into consideration the use of language in the role play.



How would you feel if you were Alex in this situation?

How could this situation have been avoided?

Did Jonah mean to make Alex upset?

What could Jonah do in the future?



It's not just in the words...

In situations where constructive criticism is required, how important do you think the use of **voice, tone** and **body language** are?

Do you think someone can say one thing but their **body language** or **tone of speech** tells you something else?



Giving constructive criticism

- **Giving constructive criticism** requires sensitivity and **awareness** of how the recipient is taking your **feedback**.
- Successful constructive criticism focuses on being clear about what you want from the person. It focuses on the improvements you would like them to make, rather than what they have done wrong or what you didn't like.

- Next time, why don't you try...
- Do you think it might be better to...?
- It would be great if you could... rather than... That would be a great help!
- It would make things a lot easier if you could... in the future.
- I am sure you meant well in.... but next time it might be more helpful if...





Role play

Practise the phrases below to give effective constructive criticism. Do you have any other suggestions of how Jonah could approach the subject?



Jonah: I noticed you had trouble meeting the deadline again. Next time, try to let me know if you're behind schedule and we'll see if we can change the deadline.

Alex: Thanks Jonah, that will really help a lot!



Jonah: It would also make things much easier if you could tell us when you're feeling overworked. That way we can try to redistribute some of your work to other people. We don't mind and would like to help you to feel comfortable.

Alex: Thanks, Jonah. It's good to know that's an option. I was feeling a little under pressure!





Giving constructive criticism in context

What are some of the signs that indicate when a person might be feeling uncomfortable with your comments? Think about and discuss the suggestions below.



body language

facial
expression

phrasing



Give constructive criticism

How could you give effective constructive criticism in each of these scenarios?



Your project partner has not completed their half of the work to the standard you had hoped for.

Your secretary could improve their use of punctuation when writing emails.

Your subordinate at work made a big decision without consulting you.



Respect

You noticed in a meeting earlier today that Sofia, your colleague, gave Trudy, the intern, some advice about her report. The criticism was quite harsh. Sofia noticed Trudy was upset and has asked you for some advice about constructive criticism. You're the expert – give her some tips!

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To: Sofia

Subject: Giving effective constructive criticism



Give constructive criticism

You are the supervisor in a busy office. Practise giving each of your team feedback on the work they did. What will you say to each of your colleagues? Remember to use constructive criticism – use some of the phrases you have learned in the lesson.

Her work is to a very good standard but she never meets deadlines.



Julia



Aaron

He ensured his team hit their objectives, but his colleagues have made complaints about his disrespectful way of communication.

He didn't listen to feedback on the last projects and has made the same mistakes again.



Bobby



Rachel

Her last project had many mistakes. However, you know she is having a difficult time outside of work.



Accepting constructive criticism

Not only is giving constructive feedback important, but it is also **imperative** that we are able to receive it in a positive way. To ensure you get the most from the constructive criticism that's given to you, follow these simple guidelines:

- Don't take it personally or be overly **sensitive**.
- Ask for specifics – be grateful for helpful **counsel**.
- Keep your facial expression **neutral** or **positive**.

Observe the phrases below for examples of accepting constructive criticism **graciously**.

- That makes a lot of sense. Thank you for taking the time to point that out to me!
- I'll make sure to take this into account in the future.
- I had a feeling I needed to improve in this area, but I wasn't sure exactly what I had to do.
- Thanks for the tips, I really appreciate it! I can definitely work on this.



Responding to destructive criticism

- Unfortunately, some people lack tact and empathy, or they are unaware of the impact their thoughtless words can have on others.
- The ability to respond to destructive criticism and negativity requires **stoicism**, a thick skin and a lot of patience.

Consider the following tips when receiving destructive criticism:

- Don't get mad, defensive or upset.
- Try not to take the comments too seriously.

Even if someone has said something thoughtless, it is always best to respond calmly.





Free speaking

- Here are some phrases that you can use to respond to destructive criticism.
- By using these phrases, you could potentially turn the destructive criticism into constructive criticism.

- Okay, just so I know how to do better next time, can you please explain to me exactly what I need to work on?
- Just so I'm sure I understand this properly, would you mind going into a bit more detail on what I can do to improve?
- I'm really sorry you didn't like it. I did try my best. Could you give me some pointers on how to improve next time?



Get ready to listen



Your teacher is going to give some criticism
on your recent work.



How would you feel?



As your teacher reads the criticism, think about how the feedback could be shared in a positive way.

Discuss your thoughts afterwards.



Responding to destructive criticism

Now imagine that you have to respond to the criticism you have just listened to.

**One way you can respond is to help the speaker improve their approach to giving constructive criticism.
Use some of the sentence starters below to give you inspiration.**

It would have been perfect to hear those points from you if you had...

One way you could give better feedback is...

I know you are only trying to help, but...

I understand what you are trying to say and I take it on board, but...



Reflect

Why is it useful to practise giving and receiving constructive criticism?

Do you think you have previously given destructive feedback?

What do you think are the consequences of giving such feedback?



Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!



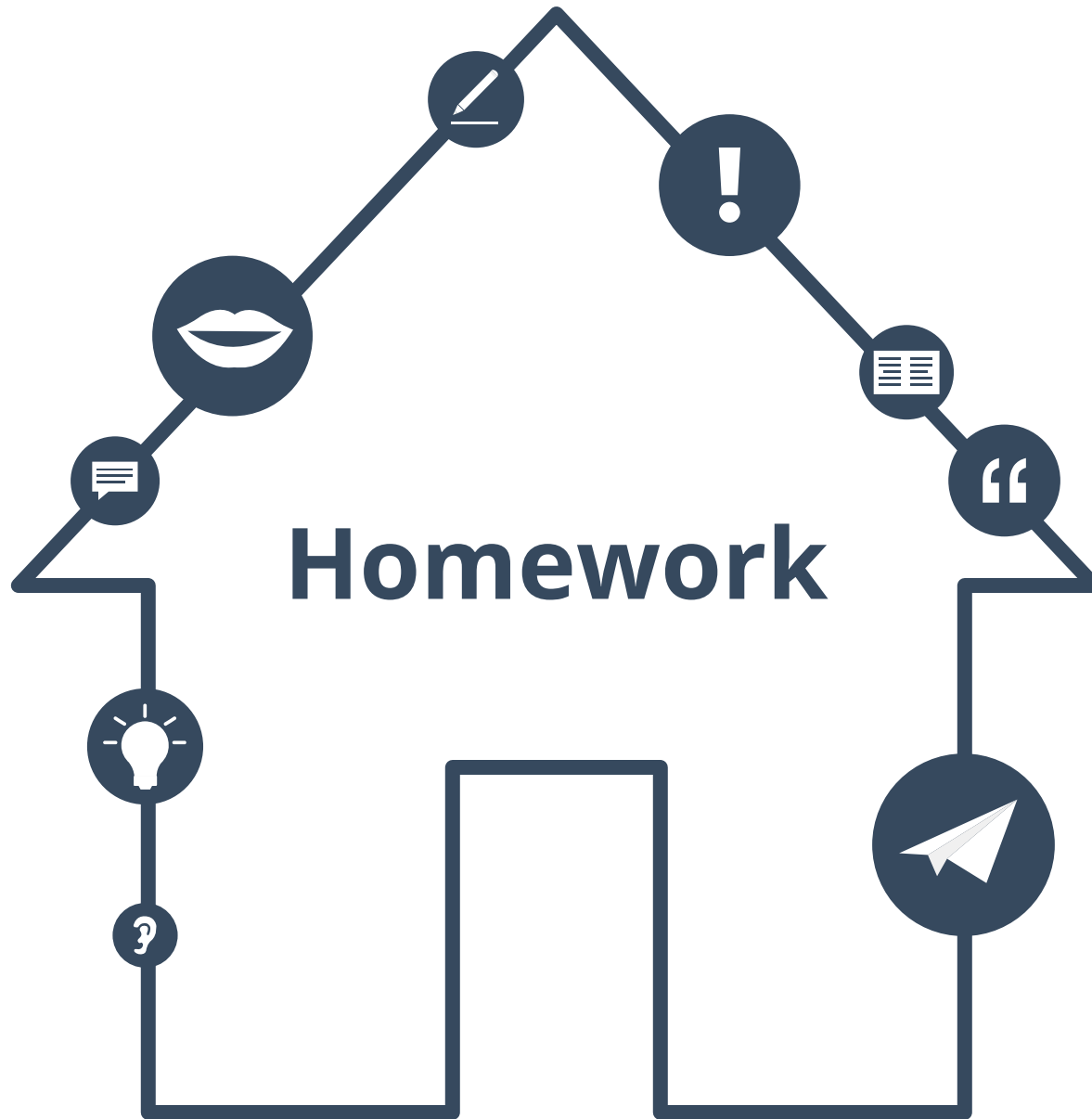


Transcription

Exercise p. 25

I just have to point out a few things about your presentation yesterday. Everybody on the team mentioned that you didn't do a very good job. I would never have settled on that colour palette, for example. That's the first thing I noticed, but trust me it wasn't the last. When you were presenting, I was unbelievably bored. If you don't want people to fall asleep when you open your mouth, you should vary your tone of voice. You should also try and project too – the people at the back couldn't even hear you! Half of the time I couldn't hear what you were saying and I was sat at the front. To be honest, you really shouldn't mumble.

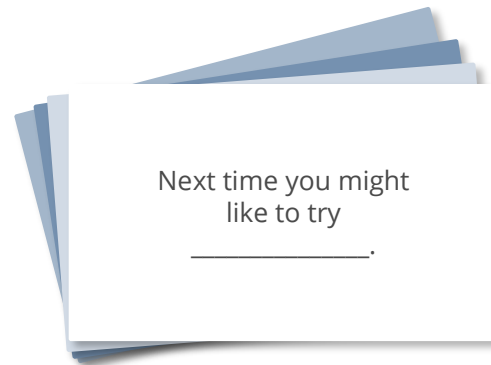
Don't feel too bad though. Some people are just terrible at presenting. Remember that time you did that joke of a presentation a couple of months ago? This was almost as bad. I guess you've made a slight improvement though.





Flashcards

Create flashcards for yourself to remind you of some of the phrases you can use to give effective constructive criticism.





Destructive versus constructive

Think about the main elements of giving constructive or deconstructive feedback. What types of phrases or words should you use or avoid? List them below.

destructive

constructive



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