

## Receiving Positive Feedback

A compliment is a gift to be accepted. It is not a bomb to be defused, nor a volleyball to be returned.

**Thank you.**

**Thanks. I worked hard on that.**

**I'm glad you liked it.**

**Thanks. I appreciate that you noticed.**

**Thanks. I feel good about it too.**

## Giving Helpful Positive Feedback

**Refrain from the false complement.** *I found that two thousand line method very easy to understand.*

**Avoid the backhanded compliment.** *Your code is so good that it doesn't need unit tests.*

**Resist complementing future behavior.** *You're really responsive and helpful. Could you please help me solve this problem.*

**Complement behavior that has occurred.** *It was really responsive of you to help me with that problem on short notice.*

**Be specific.** *I find your use of short, single responsibility methods makes the code very readable.*

**Use shaping.** *Reward gradual approximations of the goal. Well done. Your pull request increased overall test coverage from 27% to 30%.*

## Receiving Corrective Feedback

**Relax.** Open your mouth slightly. Soften your eyes. Open your hands. Relax your belly.

**Avoid retaliation.** *Well, it isn't like it's easy to read your forced use of recursion.*

**Hold back.** This is sometimes called 'elective blindness' or 'elective deafness'. In other words, ignore the nasty face or sharp tone.

**Consider your safety.** If violence is a risk, it is often not worth being assertive.

**Don't demand perfection.** Understand that most people simply aren't that skilled at giving feedback. Probe for value.

**Validate their perceptions.** *I can see how you might find this use of recursion awkward. A while loop might have been more natural.*

**Validate their emotions.** *This is important to you. You're really quite concerned about this.*

**Agree in part.** *You're right. Opinionated, automated formatting does have its downsides.*

**Listen and wait.** Let the critic voice their concern completely. Take the criticism in without taking it on.

**Narrow and specify.** *What's one downside of opinionated, automated formatting that comes to mind?*

**Ask for clarification.** *You mentioned a preference for 160 character lines. How important is that to you?*

**Explain without offering excuses.** *I used recursion here because I find it easier to reason about immutable code.*

**Don't try to change their mind.** *Agree to disagree. It's rare for a resolution to require full agreement.*

**Thank the critic.** We need feedback. Thanking them reminds us of this.

**Respond to the style.** *That was really helpful, specific feedback - thank you for speaking one-on-one.*

**Ask for time.** *Thank you for bringing up my persistence on problems. How about we meet next week, once I've had some time to consider what you said.*

**Acknowledge.** *Yes. I was half an hour late for work today. My car battery died.*

**Cloud.** Use for statements that have a grain of truth but are intended mostly as insults.

*Agree in part. Yes. I do work more than 40 hours a week.*

*Agree in probability. It could be that I work too much.*

*Agree in principle. You're right. If I work too much, I will burn out.*

**Probe.** *What is it that bothers you about [important part of feedback]?*

## Giving Corrective Feedback

**Choose your timing.**

**Watch the ratio.**

**Think before talking.**

**Talk one-to-one.**

**Frame the issue.**

**Be precise.**

**Include the positive in the message.**

**Give information, not advice.**

**Don't emote.**

Paterson, R. J. (2000). The assertiveness workbook: How to express your ideas and stand up for yourself at work and in relationships. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

McKay, M., Davis, M., & Fanning, P. (2009). Messages: The Communication Skills Book. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.