



How to Give Constructive Criticism

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Have you ever been on the receiving end of criticism and felt that you just had the wind knocked out of you? While most criticism is intended as helpful advice, many people have poor communication skills and the message gets lost in the delivery.

If you're responsible for supervising any group of people, whether small children, a sports team, or employees, it's inevitable that you'll need to deliver criticism. When that time comes, keep in mind that ***positive criticism gets much better results than negative criticism.***

Here are some ways you can constructively criticize behavior to promote positive changes:

- 1. Sandwich it.** One of the best ways to deliver criticism is through a technique called the *bamburger method*. Keeping this process in mind will help you stay positive when correcting someone.
 - Start with something positive (the bun), discuss the problem (the burger), and then finish with another complement (the bun). ***When discussing the situation, refrain from attacking the individual.*** Focus on the behavior or the situation, not the person.
- 2. Be direct.** When you're approaching someone with a complaint or criticism, deal directly with the problem. This is no time for subtle hints. Come right out and say what you need, and then offer a workable solution.
 - You can avert problems before they start by making sure your directions leave no room for misunderstanding.

- When you need to correct someone, ask him or her to explain their perspective of how to handle their task. A difference in expectations could be causing the problem. If so, state clearly what you want so they have an opportunity to change the problem.
- 3. Move on quickly.** Once you've established what you want, let this issue rest and ***give the other person time to process and implement changes.*** Over time, sometimes continued prompts may be needed, but most people will be able to implement change as long as they don't feel threatened.
- The ideal situation is where the person listens to your feedback, understands the desired outcome, and then finds a way to achieve that outcome. You can encourage this behavior with explicit expectations.
- 4. Avoid public humiliation.** Unless you're addressing an entire group who can all learn the same lessons from your criticism, ***speak to individual employees privately.***
- Showing respect by not embarrassing them in front of their co-workers will lessen any adverse reactions and can lead to a more effective conversation about the issues.
 - If your workplace is made up of cubicles, borrow someone's office or a conference room to converse privately. Avoid starting office gossip by having a private conversation in the midst of open cubicles and curious ears.
- 5. Be specific.** Relay exactly what the problem is and determine a solution. ***Vague criticism can be just as harmful as harsh criticism.*** For your best results, when giving details, strive to strike a balance between being overly critical and being indistinct.
- Rather than saying, *We need to see improvement from you*, try, *Our sales numbers are down for this quarter. I need you to schedule more sales meetings for the next month.*

When delivering criticism, always consider the other person's point of view before making your comments. Constructive criticism can be helpful and even appreciated if done effectively. Use these techniques to deliver your criticism and you'll foster a positive environment where everyone can thrive.