Feedback Strategies

*Before you get feedback*

Freewrite & Plan: Before you send out a piece of writing for feedback, take some time to organize your thoughts and identify the areas of your draft that you most want feedback on.

- What kinds of feedback comments have been helpful to you in the past? What kinds are less helpful?
- How do you feel about your draft and what kind of feedback do you want?
  - What areas are you most uncertain about? What should readers watch out for?
  - What areas are you feeling confident about? What parts are most effective for you?
  - What is the main idea you want to get across in this draft? How well do you do this?
- Where are you in the writing process (early, mid-stage, late)? What kind of feedback would be most useful to you based on where you’re at?

*Direct the attention of your reader:*

When sharing a piece of writing, explain to your reader what kind of feedback you’re looking for, as well as specific areas/concerns. This can help focus how they read so you can get more specific feedback.

- Summarize your top two or three concerns
- Provide specific questions to your reader
- Summarize changes you’ve made from the last draft that this reader has seen from you

*Once you have feedback*

Clarify: It’s appropriate to clarify feedback especially if you’re in the context of a face-to-face conversation with your responder. If your reader says something that’s vague, make sure to follow-up. You wouldn’t want to misinterpret what they’re recommending.

- **Sayback:** Rephrase feedback in your own words to check for understanding
  “When you say _____ do you mean _____?”
- **Point:** Ask directly to have them rephrase their feedback
  “What do you mean when you say _____?”
  “When you say _____ is there a specific part of my draft you were thinking about?”

*Reframe critiques into tasks or directions:* Sometimes feedback or criticism may not give you a clear way to move forward, so try to translate comments into specific things you SHOULD be doing in your writing.

- **Interpret the reader’s needs:** Take criticism or negative feedback as evidence for what the reader needs more of. For example, does a comment indicate the reader needs help following your argument, interpreting specific evidence, or connections between ideas?
- **Rephrase criticisms into directive, positive statements:**
  - **Example:** The paper was lacking enough support and you don’t adequately explain connections.
  - **Rephrase:** Support ideas with more specific evidence or examples. Explain what examples have in common and how they demonstrate your overall argument.
- **Rephrase criticisms into questions:**
  - **Example:** You demonstrate a good understanding of your data, but you need to make a stronger claim.
  - **Rephrase:** How does your data support your overall claim? What makes it interesting or significant?

*Make a plan and continue the conversation*

Break it down: If you receive a lot of complex feedback, it might be hard to decide where to start. Instead of getting overwhelmed, try to organize feedback comments into individual tasks or questions that you can approach incrementally.

- **Sort feedback comments into categories** and make lists for each
  (i.e. Organization, Style, Argument, Supporting evidence, Transitions/connections, Content knowledge, Conventions, Punctuation/mechanics)
- **Prioritize by impact:** Based on the feedback you have, what at the top two or three things your responder is suggesting that will have the biggest impact on your draft?
- **Prioritize by time:** Estimate how long specific revisions will take you (distinguishing superficial changes like formatting versus major revisions). Add them to your to-do list or calendar.

Keep communicating! As you revise try to follow-up with your reviewer if you run into questions or get stuck. If you plan on showing them another draft, try to document or summarize the changes you’ve made so they can see how you’re acting on the feedback they’ve shared.