Why is feedback important?

Instructors who give effective feedback to students aid their learning experience by correcting mistaken understanding, clarifying expectations, and helping students reflect on and improve their performance.

*Helpful feedback contributes to learning by:*

- Clarifying acceptable performance levels.
- Delivering quality information to students about their learning.
- Facilitating student self-assessment (reflection) of their learning.
- Encouraging dialogue between instructors and students and among students.
- Building student motivation and self-esteem.
- Reducing the gap between students’ current and desired performance.

Nested Hierarchy of Instructor Feedback

(Adapted from Price et al., 2010)
Help students understand the purpose of feedback
Use some class time to discuss the role of feedback in the learning process and provide guidance for students about how to use the feedback they will receive.

Provide feedback that is instructive and encouraging
The best feedback models how errors should be corrected and provides a path for improvement. Pointing out when students do something well supports them in continuing those practices.

Direct feedback toward relevant aspects of the assignment
Feedback should focus on the criteria or objectives that the assignment was designed to assess, as well as suggestions for improvement on future assignments.

Be timely with your feedback
The faster your students receive feedback on their work, the more likely they are to read it, interpret it well, and apply it to future work.

For big projects, give feedback in stages that are clear, nested, and iterative
Providing multiple opportunities for feedback on a major project or paper enables students to make improvements and develop the ability to evaluate their own work.

REFERENCES

“Thank you Dr. Haas, for equipping us with strong fundamentals and entertaining quips. I really liked how you would make the class interactive and help us grow with a constructive feedback after our presentations. Though the assignments were tough, somewhere along [the way] solving the questions, I also solved my dilemma of corporate vs academia. You inspire me and make me realize [that] pursuing academia could be cool!”

— from a “Thank-a-Teacher“ note to Kevin Haas, Civil Engineering