Common mistakes

You will definitely make some mistakes in giving feedback. All managers do. But don't let that stop you!

If you're feeling nervous about it or avoiding taking the plunge, it may help to think about some of the most common missteps before your next feedback session. That way, you'll be mentally prepared and more likely to avoid going down the wrong path. Common mistakes include:

1. Not giving enough reinforcing feedback.

It's almost impossible to give too much reinforcing feedback, but most managers give far too little. Aim for at least once per day for each of your team members.

2. Delaying the feedback.

If you're uncomfortable giving feedback, try role-playing it with friends, watch experts at work, remind yourself your team wants your feedback, set a goal or just do it! If you're too busy for feedback, then review why feedback is so important and make it a higher priority.

3. Not being specific enough about the behavior and its impact.

If the feedback is not specific enough the recipient will have to guess at which behavior you actually mean. Instead of giving feedback on "the report," give feedback on "the use of bullet points to highlight the main ideas." Instead of saying that *"it was helpful in my meeting,"* say that *"it helped me save time in a meeting with a client because she could scan the report faster."* Learn more about how to give redirecting feedback.

4. Not listening to the recipient's response.

It's almost impossible to predict how the recipient will react to feedback. You should watch and listen carefully to understand what she heard and how she feels about it. If you suspect there is a deeper issue at play, try to tease it out by asking open-ended questions.

5. Not addressing emotions during feedback.

It's common and normal for people to become emotional during feedback. But emotions get in the way of clear communication, and so should be clarified, acknowledged and then left to rest before returning to the feedback topic. Learn more about dealing with emotions when you give feedback.

Next: Go back to Giving Feedback to view solutions to common feedback problems, helpful tools and other experts' perspectives hand-picked by our research team.