

Giving and Receiving Constructive Criticism: The Sandwich Technique

The purpose of using this technique is:

- To relax the other person and help create a situation or a state-of-mind where he/she will be more open to receiving the criticism or advice.
- To reduce the possibility that the other person will get angry with you for pointing out his/her faults.
- To let others know that you are "on their side". Rather than being antagonistic, you are showing that you recognize their good points, too.
- By closing with a positive statement, you remind the people of their strengths, their worth and their value. They are more likely to be motivated to accept the negative if they are reminded that they are "not all bad".

What is the Sandwich Technique?

When you use the sandwich technique, you "sandwich" one bad point between two good points. Start off with a good characteristic of the person, or special gift they have. Then, put in the "but". Then always end it with another good point. Example: "You are so good at making those grilled cheese sandwiches. They taste so good. But I really wish that you would clean up the kitchen area after you do it. It would help me out a lot. You are so good about helping me out around the house.": Variations include:

- What I liked most was... One way you could improve this is... One of your greatest strengths is...
- The first thing I observed was that you did (_____) right. Well done. Now if we can tweak this one thing (_____) it'll be even better. There, you got it. You did great.
- One really good thing about you is... I would really appreciate it if, instead of doing _____, that you do _____. That would make me very happy. By the way, in case I haven't mentioned it lately, I just want to say that one thing I really admire about you is...
- You make a valid point. One thing I like about how you think is... Let me counter your argument by saying... Like I said, you made a good point. One thing that always impresses me about you is...

Tips for Giving Constructive Criticism:

Acknowledge a person's strengths and accomplishments before plunging into recognizing their weaknesses. Build them up as a person first before pointing out flaws and dangers.

Allow the person whom you are correcting and providing constructive criticism to ask you any questions and comment upon that which you are saying.

Refuse to get into an argument. Just state that which you see, feel, hear, and know.

Tips for Receiving Constructive Criticism:

Silence your feelings and listen objectively so you can get something from the feedback.

Remember feedback is not final. It is only a part of your whole person and performance at any given point in time.

Before saying "I know," humbly and quietly listen to all that is being told you so you can build a relational bridge, open communication lines for future feedback, and learn from that which is being said.

The poor way of giving constructive criticism:

1. That logo design sucks! Who the heck would pay for something like that!?
2. I hate red and green; why not use black and white instead!
3. I can't read the text.

The better way of giving constructive criticism on the same topics:

1. The balloon font used in the logo seems a bit too playful for your purpose; do you think a different font might be more professional?
2. 10% of the male population has red-green colorblindness; you might want to ensure that your color scheme won't turn away potential customers.
3. There isn't much contrast between the background and text color, and the font size is a bit small, so the text is difficult to read.