



Context: Workplace feedback sessions,
peer reviews, or performance conversations

Dealing with Criticism Constructively



The English Hub

Lesson Objectives

In today's lesson, you will:

- Understand key language for responding to feedback
- Practise grammar for polite, future-focused responses
- Recognise tone and structure in feedback conversations
- Build resilience through positive, proactive language



Introduction & Warm-Up

Criticism is uncomfortable, but it's also how we grow. In this lesson, we'll learn the language to respond with professionalism, openness, and calmness, no matter how the message is delivered.

Discussion:

How do you usually feel when someone gives you critical feedback?
What helps you stay calm and listen?

Vocabulary: Responding Calmly to Feedback

Review the following vocabulary with your tutor:

Phrase	When to Use
“Thanks for pointing that out.”	Acknowledging feedback
“That’s helpful to know.”	Reassuring tone
“I hadn’t realised that.”	Admitting without blame
“I’ll work on improving that.”	Action-focused
“Would you mind giving an example?”	Clarifying politely

Task: Select the most appropriate response phrase, to the following feedback statements:

1. “The slides are good, but some of the figures seem outdated.”
2. “I noticed the client emails haven’t been sent yet.”
3. “Your last report was very detailed, though the formatting could be cleaner.”

Grammar: Future Simple for Committing to Change

We often use **will + base verb** to show you accept the feedback and intend to improve.

Structure:

Subject + will + verb

Examples:

- “I will double-check before submitting next time.”
- “I’ll speak more slowly during the presentation.”

Task: Build one future-focused response for the following feedbacks:

1. “The report was informative, but there were a few spelling mistakes.”
2. “You presented well, but some of your answers were too brief.”

Activity – Defensive or Professional?

Your tutor will read out 2 responses:

- A. “That’s not true, I did it right.”
- B. “Thanks for letting me know, I’ll revisit it.”

Task: Identify which is more professional and explain why it shows better workplace communication.

Practice: Turning the following defensive statement into a constructive one:

- “You’re wrong, the deadline was already met.”

Grammar: Using “Could” for Soft Responses

We often use ‘**could**’ to suggest a softer, more open tone.

Examples:

- “Could you help me understand what I missed?”
- “Could we talk more about that example?”

Task: Practise turning the direct questions below into questions using ‘could’:

- “What’s wrong with my report?”
- “Why is this section missing?”
- “Who made this error?”



Listening: Feedback Tone Recognition

Your tutor will read the following scenarios in 3 different tones:

- Neutral tone
- Rushed and harsh tone
- Friendly tone

Scenario 1:

"The report is missing some figures from last month. Please add them before Friday."

Scenario 2:

"This really needs to be fixed today. We can't afford any more delays."

Scenario 3:

"Thanks for sending this through! A few numbers need updating, but overall it's looking strong."

Task: Identify which scenario was read in an **emotional tone**.

Then, suggest a suitable verbal response for each scenario that matches the tone.

Vocabulary: Useful Words for Receiving Feedback

Review the vocabulary below with your tutor:

Word	Meaning
Clarify	Explain more clearly
Adjust	Make a small change
Improve	Make something better
Misunderstanding	A small error in communication

Task: your tutor will use each word in a short sentence. Rephrase the sentences your tutor says using **a synonym** or **a short explanation** in your own words.

Example:

Tutor: “*Could you clarify what you mean by ‘final version’?*”

Student: “*Could you explain more clearly what you mean by ‘final version’?*”

Grammar: “I Understand That...” for Accepting Feedback

We often use the phrase ‘I understand that...’ to show emotional awareness and readiness to grow, in general and when receiving feedback.

Examples:

- “I understand that I’ve been a bit late with updates.”
- “I understand that the team needed clearer instructions.”

Task: Complete 2 statements based on the feedback below, using ‘I understand that...’ as a sentence starter:

1. **Feedback 1:** *“Some of your recent reports have been submitted after the deadline.”*
2. **Feedback 2:** *“The last presentation didn’t include enough data to support the recommendations.”*

Reading: Workplace Feedback Example

Read the dialogue below with your tutor, switch roles to read both sentences:

Manager: “Your report was thorough and included all the necessary information, but the way it was organised made it a bit hard to follow. The sections felt out of order, and some headings could have been clearer.”

Employee: “Thanks for the feedback. I’ll simplify the structure next time and make sure the headings guide the reader better.”

Discuss:

- What specific praise did the manager give about the report?
- What criticism did the manager offer, and how was it phrased?
- Was the employee’s response polite and constructive? Why or why not?
- How could the employee show they understood the feedback in more detail?
- If you were the employee, what is one specific change you would make to improve the report’s structure?

Activity: Fix the Tone

Your tutor will read out the following scenario, followed by the “unprofessional” response below:

Scenario:

During a client project, the marketing materials were delivered late because the client took longer than expected to approve the design. In a team meeting, the manager asks why the launch date was missed.

Response:

“It’s not my fault the client was late!”

Task: Rephrase the response for it to be more constructive and Student rewords it to be more constructive.

Example: “I understand it caused a delay. I’ll plan for that possibility next time.”



Grammar – Using “Would” for Soft Offers

We often use the term “would” to sound open to correction without overpromising.

Examples:

- “I would appreciate more context next time.”
- “I’d be happy to adjust if needed.”

Task: Transform the direct statements into polite offers using “would”:

1. “Give me more details next time.”
2. “Change the layout so it looks better.”
3. “Send me the files today.”
4. “Work on improving your presentation.”
5. “Add more data to the report.”

Vocabulary: Phrases to Ask for Clarification

Review the phrases and their uses below with your tutor:

Phrase	Use
“Could you explain what you meant by...?”	Clarify without sounding defensive
“I’d like to better understand...”	Show interest in improving
“Can you give a specific example?”	Avoid vague feedback

Task: Practice using two of the phrases to create a sentence for the scenarios below:

Scenario 1: Your manager says: “*Let’s try to get this done soon.*”

- The deadline isn’t clear.
- Use one of the clarification phrases to find out when exactly they expect it.

Scenario 2: A colleague tells you: “*The report needs more depth.*”

- You’re not sure what they mean by “more depth.”
- Use a phrase to ask them for a specific example or explanation.

Activity: Feedback Roleplay

Scenario: Imagine your tutor is your manager at work, and gives you the feedback below:

Feedback:

"Thanks for the work you've put into the project update. I noticed, though, that some of the budget figures in your slides don't match the latest numbers from Finance. We'll need to correct those before the client review on Friday."

Task: Respond to this feedback using the elements below:

Gratitude – Thank the manager for pointing it out

Acceptance – Acknowledge the issue without being defensive

Action plan – State what you'll do next

Grammar: “Next time, I’ll...” for Improvement Pledges

The term ‘next time, I’ll...’ combines past reflection with future intent.

Examples:

- “Thank you for your feedback. Next time, I’ll add fewer points per slide.”
- “Thanks for letting me know. Next time, I’ll run the figures twice to be sure.”

Task: Respond to the issues below using the statement ‘next time, I’ll...’

Issue 1:

"You spoke a little too quickly during the presentation, and some points were missed by the audience."

Issue 2:

"The project update email didn't include the latest figures from Finance."



Listening: Identifying Constructive Feedback

Your tutor will read out 3 samples:

- Pure praise
- General complaint
- Specific constructive feedback

1. *"You did an amazing job in the client presentation, everyone loved it!"*

2. *"The reports are always late."*

3. *Your last report had strong analysis, but the charts weren't labelled, adding labels would make it clearer for the client."*

Task: Identify which one is **useful feedback**, and why?

Activity: Response Builder Challenge

Your tutor will read out the following feedback:

"Your presentation was engaging, but some of the data slides were hard to read from the back of the room."

Task: Respond to the feedback in 3 steps:

- Thanking,
- Accepting,
- Offering a solution.

Example: "Thanks for the note. I understand timing is key, I'll aim to be more concise."



Grammar: Present Perfect Passive for Performance Feedback

We often use present perfect passive to discuss **work done** without focusing on the person.

Structure:

has/have been + past participle

Examples:

- “The figures have been miscalculated.”
- “The report has been reviewed.”

Task: Think of 2 tasks you completed at work. Create 2 passive sentences to describe the completed tasks.



Pronunciation: Confidence in Delivery

Practise reading the key responses below with a strong but calm tone:

- “Thanks, I’ll definitely apply that.”
- “I hadn’t thought of that before, useful insight.”
- “Next time, I’ll take a different approach.”

Your tutor will offer feedback and encourage a natural tone.