

# Academic Writing in English

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## Dealing with feedback

On this page, we first focus on teacher (or publisher/editor) feedback.

At the bottom of this page you will find advice on

- [How to deal with peer review feedback](#)

### Teacher (or publisher/editor) feedback

#### Formative or summative feedback?

The feedback you receive on your writing will be either *formative* or *summative*. Formative feedback is the kind of feedback you receive on your ongoing work and that is intended to help you improve your text before it is graded. Summative feedback, on the other hand, consists of the grade and any comments you receive at the end of the writing process.

Formative feedback is intended to help you improve your work in progress, whereas summative feedback is intended to help you in future writing assignments by indicating strong and weak points in your final (graded) text. Depending on what kind of feedback you have received, there are different approaches you can take to improve your text and your writing.

#### Make sure you understand the feedback

Students unaccustomed to receiving the types of feedback they are likely to receive at university may feel comments are harsh and negative. It is worth remembering that teachers target central aspects of the assignment in their feedback, and that they often comment only on issues that form part of the assessment. This means there may be no room for personal comments or encouraging words. Comments you receive on your writing are intended to help you in your learning as well as to back up your teacher's assessment of your knowledge and skills.

When you receive teacher feedback, go through all comments carefully. If you have received formative feedback, make sure you understand what your teacher expects you to do.

If your teacher has provided feedback that you do not understand, search for information that will help you resolve the problem before you ask your teacher for help.

#### Some tips on how to approach feedback

Although feedback looks different in different courses and although demands differ, you will find general advice on how to work with feedback provided on your writing below.

#### Separate global issues from local issues

It is often a good idea to work on one thing at a time when revising a text. For instance, if you need to revise the overall structure of your text, start with that before you revise sentence-level issues.

In our section on revision strategies, you will find much information that is also useful when you deal with feedback you have received.

- [How to revise](#)

#### Work with your checklist

If you have already developed a writer's checklist, it can be a great help as you revise your text. If you do not yet have such a list, look at the following advice:

- [Checklist for writers](#)

## Teachers are not proofreaders

When revising your text, consider that although your teacher might have pointed out recurring language issues once or twice, you have to go through your text carefully to see if there are other instances of similar problems. Your teacher may also state - without giving any details - that there are language issues which make your text difficult to read, and that those issues need to be addressed.

## If the feedback is not what you expected

Teachers' comments refer to a text, not to the writer as a person, but sometimes, students take feedback on their writing personally. If you feel that your teacher has made unjustified comments, try to step away from your text for a day or two before reading the comments again. Then try to identify the main points of criticism and assess them with an open mind. Sometimes, teachers' comments refer not only to what you have written but to what might be lacking in the text. Here are a few examples:

- If your text is an argumentative piece of writing, do the teacher's comments refer to something that is missing in your argument, or perhaps to something you have not presented clearly enough?
- If you draw on specific terms or theoretical concepts in your essay, have you used them correctly, or could your text benefit from some revision and clarification?
- If there are many language errors in your text, it may be difficult to read. This means that although you think your text is clear, it may not be to your examiner. Have you proofread your text and made sure there are no avoidable errors (that is, errors that a spell-check or grammar-check in your word-processing programme would pick up on)?

Although teachers will be happy to discuss their feedback, always reflect on comments you have received before you approach your teacher. This will help you to formulate questions on things you wish to bring up, and it will also give you a chance to step away from the text and see it with fresh eyes.

## Dealing with student peer feedback

When you receive feedback from your peers, read through their comments carefully before you start making any revisions to your text. The peer reviewer's role is to bring up aspects of the text that they think need to be developed or revised, but as the writer, you will need to decide on any revisions you make, since you are responsible for your text.

If the peer review is carried out in a course, you will often be able to discuss the comments you have received with the reviewer, and this is an opportunity to ask for clarifications and to discuss ways of solving issues that have been raised. As a peer reviewer of other students' texts, you will also be able to discuss their texts and get insight into how other writers think about their texts.

Further advice



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