

Types of Feedback and Responses from Reviewers

Elbow, P. & Belanoff, P. (2010). Summary of kinds of responses. In W. Luttrell (Ed.), *Qualitative educational research: Readings in reflexive methodology and transformative practice* (pp. 481-484). New York: Routledge.

A vital part of the writing process is gaining feedback from others who will offer honest feedback. When asking others for feedback, writers should specify what type of feedback is desired. Below is a succinct listing of the types of feedback Elbow and Belanoff (2010) describe to be used with a reviewing partner.

Sharing: No Response

Simply read a portion of your memoing to your partner. According to Elbow and Belanoff (2012) by just sharing “you allow yourself to listen to your own responses.... You learn an enormous amount from hearing yourself read your own words” (p. 481).

Pointing and Center of Gravity

Either read out loud a section of your memoing or allow your partner to read it. Ask your partner to identify words or phrases that stick out or are striking. You are not asking for what are the main points, but rather which are “hooks” for your partner, what draws in your partner, or what does your partner find compelling. This review may help you see aspects of your memoing differently.

Summary and Sayback

Have your partner read your piece and then offer a summary of what they read. You could also ask your partner to give you a title or one word description as a summary. You could also ask, “Say back to me in your own words what you hear me getting at in my piece.”

What is Almost Said? What Do You Want to Hear More About?

Ask the above questions of your partner. This allows the reader to offer some ideas that add to your own. Elbow and Belanoff (2010) wrote that, “what you imply but don’t say in your writing is often very loud to readers but unheard by you” (p. 482).

Reply

Simply ask, “What are your thoughts about what I have written?” Basically this asks, “now that you have read my thoughts, what are yours?” Elbow and Belanoff (2010) believed that this is the most natural and common of aspect of human communication.

Voice

You want your partner to respond by describing the voice you are using in your writing. Is it alive (meaning explicit, descriptive, and nuanced)? Or is it bureaucratic, common, or impersonal? Is the voice confident or timid? Is it cynical? In what ways does it honor the participants? Ask, “What of me comes through this writing?”

Movies of the Reader’s Mind

Ask your partner to describe what is going on in his or her mind while reading your piece. You may want to interrupt and say, “What is going on for you right now?” Encourage your partner to use “I” statements rather than “it” statements.

Metaphorical Descriptions

Ask your reader to describe your writing in metaphorical terms. For example, once a student described her essay as a belt – not imperative, but good to have. How might your partner describe your writing as the weather, animal, color, or appliance. Is it stormy or sunny?

Believing and Doubting

Ask your partner to take on the role of a believer or doubter. Ask your partner to agree with all that you have written and then offer more “evidence, arguments, and ideas to help me make a better case” (Elbow and Belanoff, 2010, p. 483). Conversely, have your partner take on the role as a doubter. Even if your partner agreed with what you wrote, have your partner find gaps and holes in your evidence and arguments.

Criterion-based Feedback

Ask for specific feedback. For example, consider using criteria from any of our texts. Or, ask about your reasoning or originality. You could ask too about the quality of your writing. Is one section too long or short? What about paragraph construction, grammar, or APA. You also could ask your partner for what criteria he or she believes is important and then how your writing meets that criteria.