

## Effective Performance Feedback

Often, the most feedback people get is at work when they are not performing. It's the same when you're an official volunteering your time, giving back to a sport in some way – you always hear it when people aren't happy with your efforts. It is a pleasant surprise to be told you are doing well.

There are two types of feedback:

- One is to help people improve their performance
- The other is to give praise when someone performs well.

Positive feedback is a powerful tool for motivating people.

### Guidelines

Here are some guidelines for giving useful, quality feedback.

**It's requested.** When a fellow official asks how they're doing, they will listen more easily.

**It's specific.** "Your refereeing overall lately has been poor" doesn't tell the person what *poor* means.

**It's in the right place.** Improvement feedback should be done in a private place, out of the hearing of others. Positive feedback should be as public as possible depending on the person's sensitivity.

**Focus on what people can change.** Frustration increases when someone is reminded of a shortcoming which they have no control over.

**It's a learning experience.** Ask what they learned, and what they'll do differently next time.

**It's well timed.** Give feedback as soon as possible after the activity.

**It's focused.** Focus on a particular part of the game, not everything they've done wrong in the last six weeks.

**It's about the future.** You cannot change the past, but you can learn from it to get solutions for better performance in the future.

**It's balanced.** Both positive feedback and feedback for improvement helps build trust. That doesn't mean that each time you give feedback you have to do both, but over time, there should be some of each.

## What if the person has a bad attitude?

Bad attitudes are bad behaviour. Dealing with a bad attitude is challenging. Focus on the behaviour rather than on the person. For example, “I’m concerned about you being rude to players when they ask a question”, does not clearly describe the behaviour. Try saying, “I’m concerned about your abrupt tone of voice when you dealt with the captain of that team yesterday”.

## Steps for giving feedback to those with bad attitudes

### Step 1 – What?

- Tell the person what you want to discuss
- Describe the issue, situation, behaviour or actions - tell them what happened. Focus on the problem, not the person. No judgements, no name calling.

### Step 2 – The Effect?

- Tell the person the effect their performance had on the players, coaches and spectators. If you don’t know, don’t guess.
- Tell them why it’s important to do things differently.

### Step 3 – What next?

- Ask the person what they can or will do to change their performance.
- Listen to their answer.
- Get agreement on a solution that works.
- Set a date and time to review progress.
- As soon you notice better performance, tell them. Behaviour that gets rewarded, gets repeated.

## Warnings!

When someone says, “I’ll try to...”, ask them what actions they will take. “Try” is often just wishful thinking.

When someone says, “I don’t know”, try saying, “If you did know, what would you do?” Or, “If you had one idea about this, what would it be?”

## Defensiveness

- Ask questions to find out what the defensiveness is about.
- Repeat back your understanding of what they say.
- Get agreement on the solution.