

Mentor

COMMUNITY

Instructor Feedback: A Step-By-Step Guide to Asking for Clarification

Savvy Strategies to Help you Succeed

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Introduction

Instructor feedback is a powerful tool: constructive criticism encourages your growth as a student and facilitates skill improvement. That's why, when you are unsure of how to interpret or apply an instructor's feedback, it's important to reach out for clarification. This presentation offers a step-by-step guide to getting the support you need in understanding your instructor's feedback.

ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION: THE BASICS

Asking instructors to clarify feedback can feel uncomfortable at first: it's hard to ask for help, but succeeding as a student often means overcoming the anxiety of reaching out. This guide is meant to help alleviate some of the anxiety around asking for clarification by offering templates and concrete strategies.

When asking for clarification, remember:

Instructors *want* to help, so help them help you by:

- Being honest, direct, and specific
- Being professional and respectful



STEP 1: BE HONEST & DIRECT

While reaching out can be anxiety-inducing, know that it's common for students to have follow-up questions about feedback, rubrics, and grades. To help start a conversation with your instructor, consider using one of the templates below to ask an honest, direct clarifying question.

Example Clarifying Question Starters

- I'm a bit confused by _____. Could you explain _____?
- If I'm understanding your feedback correctly, _____. Can you tell me if I'm on the right track?
- Based on your feedback, it sounds like I need to _____. Is this correct?
- In my assignment feedback, you mentioned _____. Can you provide an example of _____?

STEP 2: BE SPECIFIC

Use one of the templates on the previous slide as a starting point—but elaborate with unique details about your assignment and the feedback you received.

Example

Identify your course and clearly state the purpose of your email.

I'm a student in your ENGL1010-3 course, and I'm reaching out with a question regarding the feedback I received on the week 3 Cultural Artifact Assignment. In my assignment feedback, you mentioned that I'm missing a thesis statement. Can you provide an example thesis statement for this assignment?

Provide details around the assignment you are inquiring about.

STEP 3: BE RESPECTFUL & PROFESSIONAL

As always, be respectful and professional. Treating others—peers and instructors alike—with professionalism cultivates a culture of respect that ensures everyone feels safe, welcome, and valued. As a final step, add in a professional greeting and closing.

Example

Dear Professor Jackson,

Open with a professional greeting.

I hope you're well. I'm a student in your ENGL1010-3 course, and I'm reaching out with a question regarding the feedback I received on the week 3 Cultural Artifact Assignment. In my assignment feedback, you mentioned that I'm missing a thesis statement. Can you provide an example thesis statement for this assignment?

Thank you for your time,
James Smith

Close with a thank you and your full name.



Closing

Understanding instructor feedback is critical to your success as a student. When a grade, piece of advice, or rubric score isn't clear to you, don't be afraid to ask for clarification.

If you're still feeling apprehensive about reaching out, check out these additional resources on interpreting and accessing feedback, communicating with instructors, and asking for help:

- [Learning and Growing from Instructor Feedback](#)
- [Communicating with Instructors](#)
- [Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help!](#)

Questions? Email us at academicskills@mail.waldenu.edu