

Sarah Anderegg

From: Jonathan Eldridge
Sent: Thursday, October 6, 2022 10:39 AM
To: Jonathan Eldridge
Subject: Fall 2022 Faculty Information & Updates, Volume X
Attachments: How to Give Your Students Better Feedback With Technology.pdf; Grant Executive Summary Form_FA2022[1].pdf

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Dear College of Marin Faculty:

Two items for you this week—

1. The College's AP3280: Grants was recently updated to include more detailed information on the steps those seeking grants must take prior to submitting a grant application. You can find the updated procedure here: <https://policies.marin.edu/sites/policies/files/AP3280-Grants.pdf>. To assist with the preparation of a grant proposal and compliance with the AP, we have developed a [fillable PDF](#) that includes all of the steps referenced in the AP. That form can be found in the MyCOM portal's forms section, but I have also attached a version here for your review/use.
2. I have also attached *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* recent guide to **Giving Students Better Feedback with Technology**. It outlines how students and faculty are not always on the same page with feedback—what students find most helpful and what professors most want to share. The guide provides concrete examples for your consideration as you work to give the most useful feedback possible to students, both formally and informally.

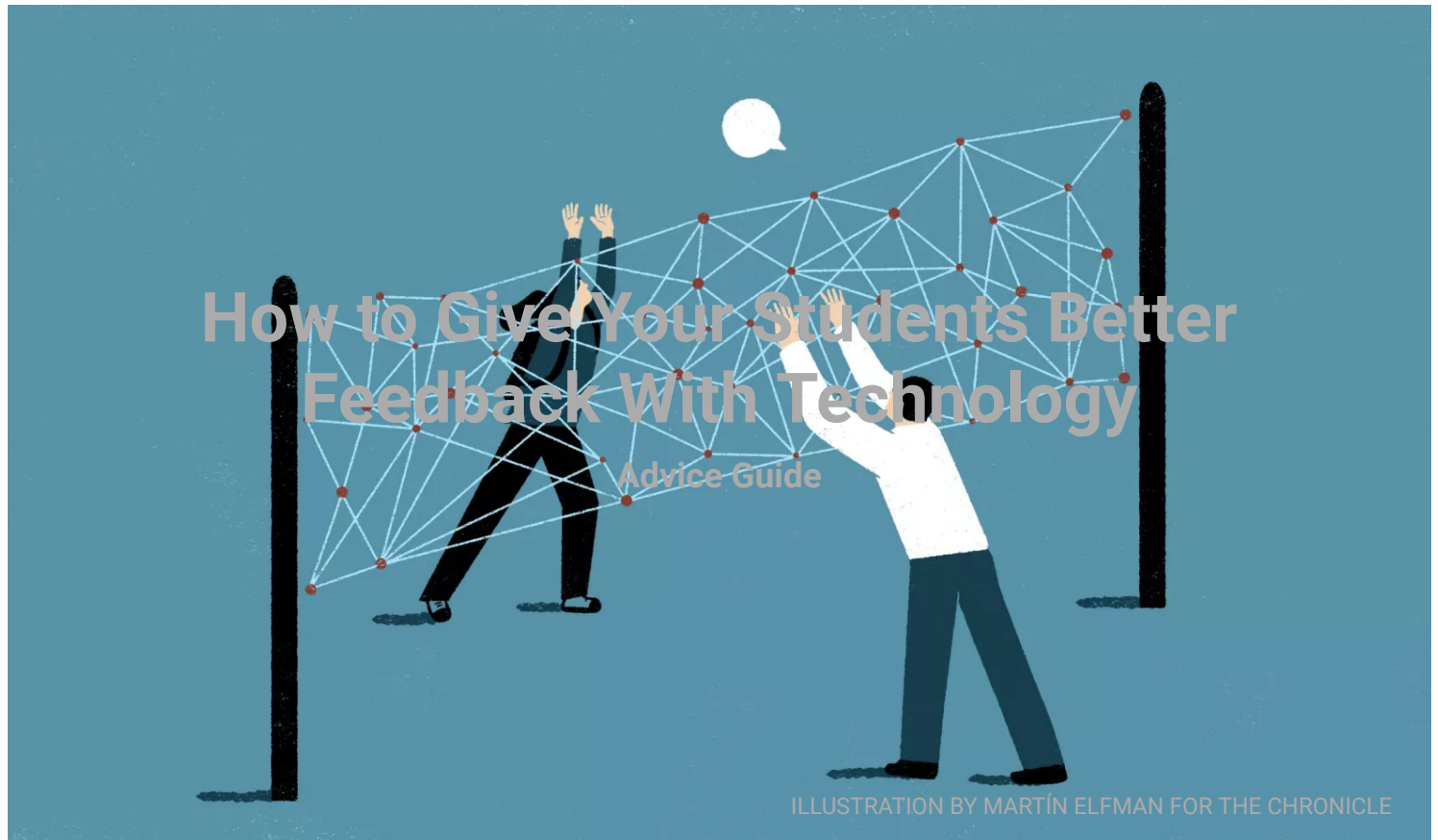
Thank you for all you do.

Jonathan



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THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION



ADVICE

By Holly Fiock and Heather Garcia

Think back to your time as a student. How did you experience feedback from your own instructors? Did reading their comments on your work bring moments of elation? Pride? Disappointment? Bewilderment? Do you still have a visceral reaction to a lot of red ink?

Feedback can be a powerful force in college classrooms, and there are ways to make the experience of providing and receiving it even stronger. That's especially important as students continue to report [dissatisfaction with the feedback](#) they get on assignments and tests — calling it vague, discouraging, and/or late.

Technology has the potential to make course feedback better — more effective, more engaging, more timely — but that won't happen automatically. Technology must be thoughtfully applied, not just used for the sake of using it. As an instructor you may have a variety of feedback tools already at your disposal, via your institution's online platform or learning-management system (LMS), such as Google Classroom, Blackboard, Moodle, Desire2Learn, or Canvas. But that doesn't mean you know how to use them to improve your feedback.

Welcome to *The Chronicle's* guide on how to use technology to better evaluate and comment on students' work. Whether you're a novice or an expert user of technology, you will find useful tips and answers to common questions here.

A frequent misperception is that the only people who should worry about how instructors provide feedback are the instructors. However, feedback is an important consideration for all learners, instructional designers, future teachers, technologists, academic deans, and others. It's not uncommon for students to be asked to provide feedback to their peers in class. So whether you teach online or in a face-to-face classroom, whether you work with students or support teachers, whether you're a designer or a technologist, there's something in this guide for you.



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Essentials

We've all been the recipient of feedback that was more painful than productive. One of us (Holly) remembers nervously sending off an article for peer review as a graduate student and receiving two positive critiques with specific advice on areas for improvement. The third reviewer, however, was not so kind and wrote, "Could kail het" (a.k.a., cold food reheated). The reviewer "helpfully" explained what that phrase meant but offered no suggestions on how to move the work forward.

When it comes to feedback, students and instructors often are not on the same page:

- Students want feedback with specific, detailed directions for future improvement, offered in a manner that is both constructive and encouraging. And they want that advice sooner rather than later. Many studies have shown that the ideal time for learners to receive feedback ranges from two to 15 work days. Beyond that point, students have moved on to other topics and learning activities and the feedback is much less helpful.

- Meanwhile, instructors, according to [one study](#), “tended to believe their feedback was more useful, fair, understandable, constructive and encouraging and detailed in comparison to what students felt they were receiving.”

So let’s start this guide by looking at the big picture. What do we mean here by feedback?

We mean the various types of guidance and direction that instructors provide: corrections or positive reinforcement after an exam, explanations on written work, details and notes included as part of rubric grading. Monitoring student learning through regular assessment is an important element of an instructor’s job. By providing individualized feedback, you help students stay on track, personalize their learning, and build trust and connections.

As technology continues to advance, so does the opportunity to provide feedback via different tools. While that has some downsides, the good news is you can leverage those tools to help students. By “feedback tools,” we mean digital applications or extensions used to give responses to your students’ work. There are a number of options available:

- Rubrics: online scoring guides to evaluate students’ work.
- Annotations: notes or comments added digitally to essays and other assignments.
- Audio: a sound file of your voice giving feedback on students’ work.
- Video: a recorded file of you offering feedback either as a “talking head,” a screencast, or a mix of both.
- Peer review: online systems in which students review one another’s work.

Each tool offers the opportunity to communicate directly with students and guide their learning. How?

- Say you have to grade a lot of papers with extensive formatting, outline, or grammatical concerns. Embedded comments and tracked changes will do the trick. You can walk students through all of your concerns and show them exactly how to do something or what it should look like.
- Looking for a way to provide fast feedback? Audio may be your best bet. You can quickly record your voice and send the files off to each student.
- Maybe you have to help students through a complicated problem with multiple steps. Video feedback may be the solution. (We'll discuss this more below in the "When to Use Audio or Video Tools for Feedback" section.)

To put our cards on the table upfront: We are strong advocates of video and audio feedback, and that's what you will see most emphasized in this guide. Whatever your reservations about audio and video, we would urge every faculty member to give it a try.

Written feedback is so easy to misconstrue. Students often read it as harsher than you intend. By providing feedback with your voice, however, your students will be able to listen to your tone and understand that you are being encouraging and are directing their learning.

Over all, when instructors use audio or video technologies, they tend to provide more feedback than written text alone. Yet, we've found that — once you learn the ropes — using audio or video feedback can save time. There is a learning curve at first. But the more you become familiar with these feedback tools, the more time you will save, and the more productive you will become as an instructor.

It is normal to feel overwhelmed by the excess of options ([find tips here](#) on how to make smart tech choices for your classroom). So before you get started with any new feedback tool, pause and remember: It's not the type of tool that matters, but *how you use it*. Students will not be wowed by your video feedback on their work if it doesn't make sense, is unhelpful, or took you three weeks to produce.

Our goal here is to present different ways of giving feedback. But the most important piece of the whole equation is the feedback itself. At no point should you use a tool just because it is cool or trendy — use it only if it helps you communicate better with your students. Good feedback should always be frequent, specific, balanced, and timely. Let's consider each in turn.



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4 Key Qualities of Good Feedback

But first, a caveat: Feedback is not the same as criticism.

While often conflated, they are [distinct activities](#) with different end goals. Criticism involves judgment and faultfinding, while feedback is evaluative and corrective. Describing a student's work as “could kail het” without any actual guidance on how to improve it will leave her directionless and discouraged. Feedback should tell the recipients where they erred and how they can do better next time. Critique is an important skill for any academic to learn but not one you should use to assess students' work. So how should we evaluate their work?

The goal of any evaluation and feedback should be to support the learning process, help students understand where they did not meet established standards, and aid them in identifying what they can do better next time. Feedback should guide them toward building new knowledge and increasing their skills.

Two main types of feedback — formative and summative — work together in that process but have different purposes. Formative feedback occurs during the learning process and is used to monitor progress. Summative feedback happens at the end of a lesson or a unit and is used to evaluate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

For example: Perhaps you require students to submit a writing assignment that demonstrates their knowledge of a topic based on their own research and analysis. Maybe you set a series of deadlines along the way for their rough drafts and annotated bibliographies. You would give formative feedback on those rough drafts and bibliographies to make sure students were on the right track. The project's final grade and assessment is a form of summative assessment.

Throughout the course, students should receive ample formative and summative feedback, but let's consider some general principles. Good feedback should be:

Frequent. Students rely on your feedback to guide their learning. If they're not receiving it consistently and often throughout the course, they may have difficulty identifying where to focus their efforts. We recognize that frequency is relative to a number of factors: the type of course, term length, content, credit hours, etc. We recommend you provide students *at least* one opportunity a week to receive your feedback. It doesn't have to be a big weekly assignment — it can be something as small as giving an in-class quiz or responding to a student's discussion post. Weekly feedback may seem impossible in a big class. But most large courses come with teaching assistants who help manage the feedback load.

Specific. Good feedback not only details the areas for improvement but offers actionable advice. Merely telling a student “this needs work” does not provide any guidance on how to fix the problem. Here’s a good example of specific feedback: “I would like to hear more details of why you chose this framework. You also assume the reader knows all about the theories you’re using — but it would help to define what they mean here.”

Balanced. You shouldn’t shy away from pointing out weaknesses in students’ work, but neither should you avoid highlighting their successes. Letting students know what they did well is empowering and reinforcing. Affirm their strengths to balance the flaws in their work. Some call that approach the “feedback sandwich” — corrective feedback sandwiched between positive feedback.

Timely. For it to be most useful, feedback should be given as soon as possible.

Formative feedback that meets all four principles is not just good practice but critical to student success. As Viji Sathy and Kelly A. Hogan explain in their [guide on inclusive teaching](#), frequent, low-stakes assessments are an inclusive teaching practice.

Incorporating lots of low-stakes assessments provokes less anxiety because they carry less weight in a student’s grade than a high-stakes midterm or final exam. Frequent, low-stakes assessments also provide more opportunities for students to practice new skills or demonstrate knowledge and get feedback.

At this point you are probably nodding your head but thinking, “you said I was going to save time, but all of this sounds like it takes a lot of time.” Just figuring out how to operate the technology will take time. Once you’ve conquered that, the efficiency comes, in part, from knowing when to use digital-feedback tools.

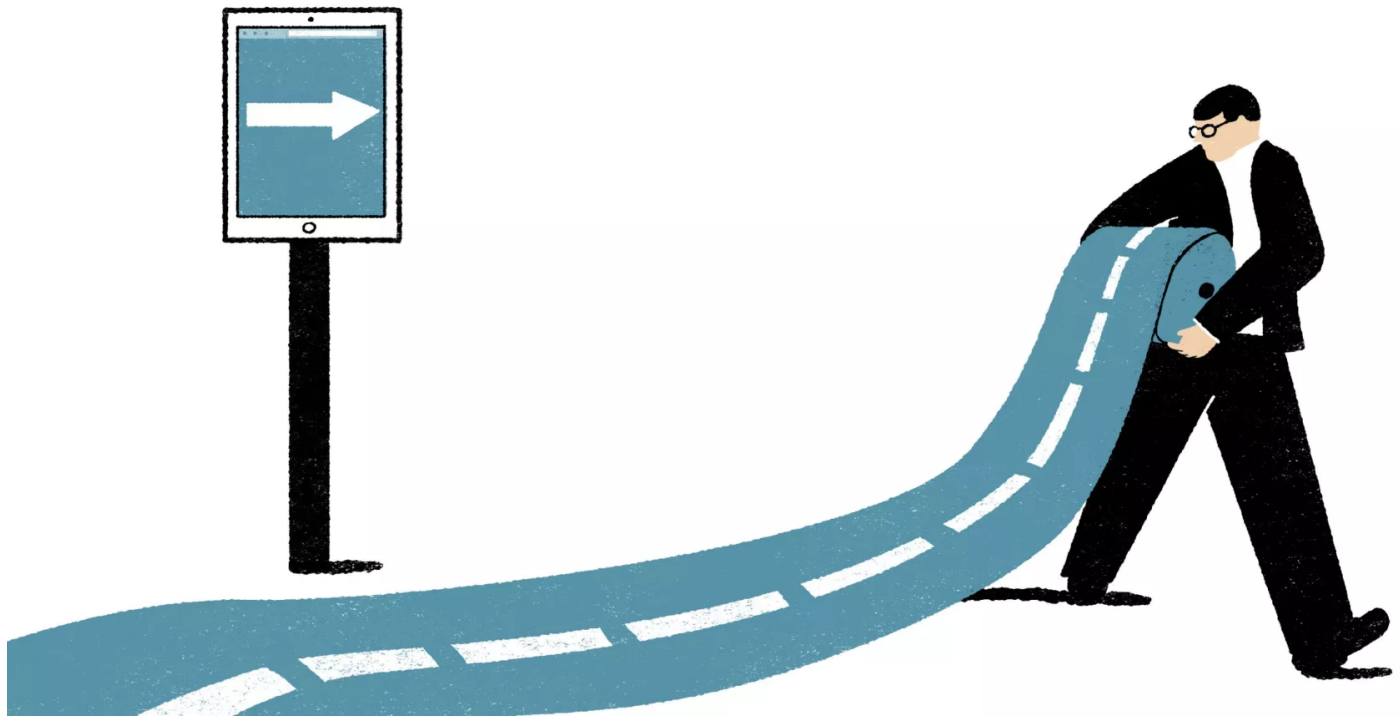


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2 Time-Saving Approaches

We'll be diving into the when-to-use-technology question shortly. But first we turn to two time-saving techniques — rubrics and peer review — that are essential to providing specific and balanced feedback. Both can be used with or without technology. Our advice:

Use rubrics whenever possible. A rubric is helpful, not just for your own grading, but also to give students a clear understanding of the evaluation criteria *before they even begin the assignment*. Your grading is more transparent to students, and less prone to bias, when you use a rubric.

Traditionally, professors handed out print copies of their grading rubric, with a row for each criterion and columns that defined the various levels of performance. Now digital tools — standard on most learning-management systems — can be used to create and grade with rubrics. Say you are evaluating a student's paper. A digital

rubric speeds up the grading process by allowing you to click on the appropriate criterion and automatically tally the points and calculate the grade.

Peer review can be a major time saver in large classes. The idea here is for students to evaluate one another's work. Peer review is especially useful when students are working on scaffolded assignments with multiple opportunities for feedback. With a lot of students, you might not find it feasible to provide frequent and robust feedback in a timely manner at each stage of the assignment. Instead, ask peers to evaluate the earliest drafts, so that students can make improvements before submitting their final version to you for grading.

Peer review can be a logistical challenge. However, most learning-management systems have peer-review tools that make it easier to assign peers and manage the process. Rather than randomly pairing students, some systems even allow the instructor to be strategic about it. For example, an instructor may decide to pair up a student with particular strengths and another who struggles in those areas to assess each other's work. Peer-review tools also allow instructors to assign peer reviews anonymously. In many systems, it is also possible to have students complete a rubric and comment on specific features of the assignment.

For a more robust set of peer-review features and analytics, it might be worthwhile to explore third-party tools, such as [Peerceptiv](#). Check with your campus IT or online-learning departments to see which tools are already available to you.



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When to Use Audio or Video Tools for Feedback

Finding the right time and place to use technology on this front is easier than you might think. Keep in mind: It's not just about doing this part of your job more quickly or efficiently — it's about making your feedback more effective for students. And, if you're worried about accessibility, read on. We'll cover this in our "Tips on Getting Started" section.

Let's consider a few scenarios in which audio and video feedback might be the best solution to a pedagogical challenge.

You want to personalize your feedback. A grading rubric may identify common trouble spots in an assignment, but won't necessarily highlight the specific errors holding an individual student back. That's where a video-feedback tool comes in handy. A screencast video of a student's assignment, coupled with you walking the student through the project using audio feedback, allows you to provide detailed, one-on-one support and build a closer connection with every student. Such a personalized

approach works well in a small class of 30 students or fewer. It's more difficult to accomplish in a large class, unless you have TAs.

Or maybe, in evaluating a student's paper, you usually make handwritten notes and then refer back to them in deciding on the final grade and feedback. With audio or video feedback, you can record your observations, saving time since most of us speak faster than we can type. Audio and video notes typically are more detailed, too, as you explain verbally what you are seeing in the student's work.

You want to convey nuance. Speaking of voice, there are many times — and many content areas — in which conveying nuance is important. For example, if you are teaching a communications course that emphasizes tone, body language, and social skills, it's easier to show rather than tell. With video feedback, you can show students exactly what you mean.

The same goes for foreign-language courses. Instructors can use audio files to ensure that tones and dialects are being used or learned properly. Just as you would demonstrate good writing in a writing class, you should demonstrate best practices in a speech-related course.

It's difficult to evaluate verbal-presentation skills using written feedback alone. With digital tools, you can record their presentations (or have students record themselves) and then use screencasting software to insert your feedback. Besides pointing out content errors, you can use the software to show students when they are repeatedly using “um” to fill gaps, putting their hands in the pockets, or rolling their eyes.

You want to demonstrate a process. In some content areas, such as mathematics, chemistry, and physics, getting the right answer means completing steps in a certain order. Communicating to your learners exactly where an error occurred in a process can be challenging. By using screencasting software, you can point to the exact location of a student's error and show how it affected the outcome.

One great example of this in mathematics is [this video](#) on how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide positive and negative numbers. You can send such a video to a particular student who is struggling with the concept of negative numbers, or upload it for the entire class so that everyone can learn. Technology allows you to provide a mini, one-on-one learning experience.

You want to avoid miscommunication. We've all received an email or text that came off as angry or downright rude. Chances are that wasn't the sender's intention. If you find that students seem to misinterpret your written communication, or if you receive student evaluation data that show you are perceived as cold and impersonal, [audio or video feedback](#) may help to resolve those problems.

Audio and video tools allow students to hear your intonation, listen to you laugh, watch when you are serious, and see when things are OK but could use some polishing.

You want to improve your pedagogy. Faculty interest in classroom innovation is on the rise. Professors are trying all sorts of new techniques to [improve the first few minutes of class](#), to make their teaching [more engaging](#), to hold [better class discussions](#). Buzzwords like [active learning](#), [authentic assessment](#), [technology integration](#), and [case-based learning](#) are more and more a part of faculty discussions.

When you try innovative approaches, your usual evaluation techniques may no longer be sufficient. For example, if you assign a project in which the choice of content is subjective or open-ended, a one-size-fits-all grading process may no longer work. Here, again, audio and video feedback can come to the rescue, allowing you to personalize your feedback on a broad array of projects.

You want to be more connected and “present” in your classroom. Especially in an online classroom, audio or video feedback may help students feel less isolated. They may want a personal connection with their instructor for a number of reasons —

they're new to college, they've never had an online course before, they're insecure about their abilities. Other students may feel uncomfortable "bothering" the instructor with questions or speaking up in front of their peers. When you use audio or video feedback, especially in online environments, students begin to see you as a real person giving feedback — not just someone behind a computer screen. You become human.

In face-to-face teaching, digital tools can help you provide feedback more efficiently. You may not have time to meet with students in your office as much as you (or they) would like (especially in the case of large class sizes). Students who can't attend office hours, for whatever reason, may feel motivated to learn if they are able to see and hear your voice giving them specific and personalized feedback. It also may help them to feel less separated from you as an instructor. In large classes, in addition to utilizing TAs, peer review and audio and video feedback can help learners feel connected to you and to one another.

You want to keep up with the times. Think of the last time you needed to fix something. Did you ransack the house looking for the owner's manual, or did you quickly search for a how-to video on YouTube? If you did the latter, think of all of your students who are probably doing the same.

Your learners may be more open to watching and listening to what you have to say, more so than reading it — so long as you don't send long recordings (we recommend you limit audio and video feedback to three to five minutes). By using video and audio feedback tools, you are helping students solve their study-related problems in much the same way that they (or you) would have hopped on YouTube to find out how to change a tire.

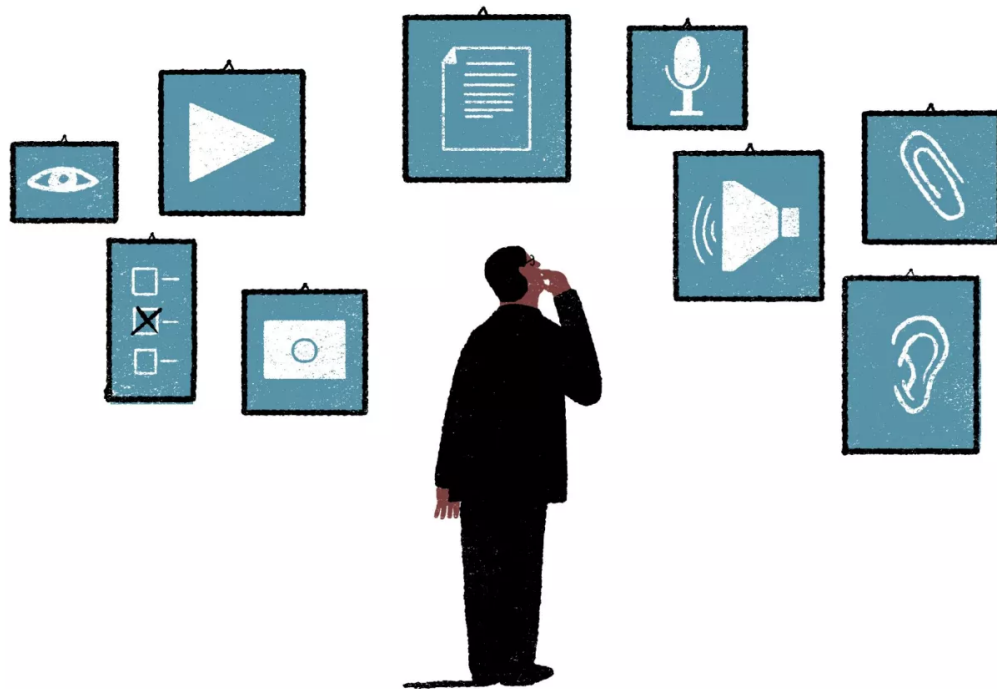


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When to Stick to Text Feedback

Clearly we believe in the merits of audio and video feedback. But sometimes, written feedback is still your best bet. Even when that's the case, technology can help you provide that written feedback with greater efficiency.

For example, if your assignment requirements are clearly laid out, with straightforward and well-defined expectations, you might be better off using an online rubric that allows brief text-based comments. Here are a few digital options for text-based feedback:

- **Annotation tools.** Some course-management systems have built-in annotation tools that you can use to leave comments and feedback directly on a student submission. You can use them without having to download each and every file, which saves a lot of time.
- **Built-in rubrics.** You may have designed your own rubrics for assignments, but if your LMS or other learning platform has a built-in rubric tool, we highly

recommend you give it a try. Built-in rubrics offer time-saving features such as reusable comments and a total-points column that will automatically add up the points you've assigned for each criterion of the rubric — another time-saver.

- **Automated feedback.** Also known as “computer-assisted assessment,” this tool basically lets you reuse your written feedback. Some LMS rubrics or other grading platforms allow you to save a comment you wrote for one student and use it again for others who made the same mistake or achieved the same success. In addition, your LMS may allow you to preprogram question-specific — or even answer-specific — feedback for your auto-graded quizzes. For example, for a correct answer, the automatic feedback might say, “Good job,” and for an incorrect answer, it might say, “Please rewatch part two of this week’s lecture,” or, “Please revisit pages 27-29 of your textbook.”
- **Electronic surveys or live polling.** Both have gained in popularity as [a fast way to gauge](#) how well your class as a whole is understanding the material. A thumbs-up rating, a star system, or a simple yes-or-no question can give you valuable feedback on class topics and help you tailor the content and emphasis. You can also use surveys and polls to get a quick read on how students think the course is going, and then make adjustments.



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Tips on Getting Started

Now that you have a feel for when to use digital-feedback tools, here are a few tips and tricks to get you started.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Most digital tools have online support forums, and most colleges and universities have dedicated staff members to help you learn the technology and adopt it in your courses. Technology is constantly evolving. We'd like to think this guide will tell you what you need to know on this front, but it's hard to keep up with every new feature, functionality, and gadget out there.

That's why it's important to ask for help, and keep asking. Think of your own classroom. You want students to reach out when they need help or don't understand content, right? Just as you support learners, there are people out there — e.g., instructional designers, educational technologists, information technologists — who want to help and support you, too.

Start with tools your institution already has. One of the easiest ways to get started is to use the digital-feedback tools integrated into your campus LMS. They've already been used and tested, meaning that many bugs or tweaks have been worked out and solutions to common issues are readily available. Your institution may have a plethora of resources — getting-started tips, reference videos, dedicated support staff, FAQs, and the like.

Try the digital-feedback tools of a system with which you are already comfortable. Instead of trying to learn a new technology, consider what screencasting software or web-conferencing tools you use for other work purposes. The transition may be easier because the learning curve is less steep. You know how to use the technology; you just have to figure out how it can help you give individualized feedback to your students.

Mix it up. One size does not fit all. There is no universal best practice for providing feedback. So vary your approach. Use a mix of rubrics, written comments, annotations, and audio or video. The feedback tool should fit the student and the activity. For example, you would not offer the same type of feedback for a multiple-choice quiz as you would for a 10-page paper. Context is critical when it comes to using technology in your classroom and giving feedback.

Make sure your choices are accessible for everyone. As with all course design, [accessibility](#) should be [taken into consideration](#) when giving feedback. If you create audio or video feedback, make sure all students can access it. If you are unable to provide captions or transcripts, ask students if they prefer written comments. If the tool you are using provides automatic captioning, make sure you speak clearly for the greatest accuracy. A broad range of students benefit from accessible feedback tools, not just those with particular needs.

Ask your students. They are happy to tell you how they feel about your teaching methods or other aspects of the course, especially when granted anonymity. So why not ask what they think about your feedback practices? That can be done via a survey

or a poll. By asking for their views, you are helping put power in their hands over their own learning. And in the process you learn which feedback methods will work best for them

Expect a few roadblocks. That includes technology limits — on file sizes or on downloading or access issues (for those with slow or limited internet). You will also face cost limitations. But as with anything, the more familiar you become with these tools, the better they will work for you and your students. Experience using these tools, ultimately, will help you save time when providing feedback to your students and improve the quality of that feedback.

Common Pitfalls and Smart Solutions

Don't assume technology will solve every problem. It's worth repeating: Context is critical when it comes to using technology. If your course evaluations rate your feedback as lousy, delivering it via a shiny new digital tool is unlikely to fix the root of the problem. Maybe you need to reconsider the substance of your feedback. Audio or video feedback should not be used for all assignments, either. Try to vary your feedback techniques and select the most appropriate method for each assignment.

Avoid making long videos. Be sensitive to students' time and file-size constraints. Just because they prefer audio or video feedback doesn't mean they want to sit through an overly long recording. That may deter them from watching/listening at all, especially if it takes a long time to download. We would recommend that you keep your feedback recordings to under five minutes. Try to be concise and on topic in your feedback. This is not the time for a lecture.

Video and audio feedback doesn't have to be perfect. You can waste a lot of time trying to edit out every pause, "um," or mistake. You can't go back and delete those verbal tics in real time, so don't worry about doing so digitally. In fact, hearing your actual voice and tone is one element of audio and video feedback that appeals to

students. We're not saying don't practice at all. Especially if you are new to this form of feedback, practice what you are going to say before you hit record.

There is such a thing as too much information. In creating videos, it's easy to overlook cognitive overload. In layman's terms, that is when you present too much information too fast. Make sure you only talk about whatever it is you are pointing to on the video. If you are talking about a paper's organization but suddenly start highlighting another element (say a table or graph), you risk confusing the student. To minimize that problem, use the cursor or a highlighting tool to point out exactly what you are talking about so that your voice and the image(s) align for the learner. That is called signaling, and it helps to reduce the cognitive load for your students.

Have a plan. Don't add a new digital tool at the last minute or without preparation. The technology may have limits or issues (i.e., user maximums, long download time, large file sizes, associated fees, etc.) that you need to be aware of. Become familiar with the tool and its limitations. Plan how you will use it. As you teach a course, take notes on what technologies would or would not work in different situations. Add a question to the end of the course that asks students for their point of view on adding or using a specific technology. Their feedback can guide your instructional choices when you next teach the course.

Resources

What follows is a list of applications and technologies that we've found most useful in providing feedback. We do suggest that you first check with your department and/or institution to see what is already available (and locally supported) for instructors on your campus.

Free tools:

- [SoundCloud](#): An easy audio-recording tool that you can embed in your learning-management system so students can click an arrow and play your recording.

- [Vocaroo](#): A simple, PC-friendly tool for recording your voice. You can immediately get a link to the recording and give it to students.
- [Screencast-O-Matic](#): A screencasting tool that allows you to record up to 15 minutes.
- [Kaizena](#): A site that helps you provide verbal feedback directly on student documents and track their progress by comparing your feedback history over multiple assignments.
- [Screencastify](#): A screen recorder for Chrome (via extension) that requires no download.

Paid tools:

- [VoiceThread](#): A learning tool that allows the instructor and the students to participate in a pre-uploaded presentation by providing text, audio, and/or video discussions.
- [Snagit](#): A screenshot program by TechSmith that captures both video and audio.
- [Camtasia](#): Another program by TechSmith that allows users to create video via screencast or direct recording.
- [Panopto](#): A program that provides recording, screencasting, and video streaming for users.
- [Hippo Video](#): An all-in-one, cloud-based, video-management system that allows users to capture, edit, and share video, audio, and screen recordings.

A starter kit:

For newbies to digital feedback tools, here are the best resources to get you started:

- A list of [75 digital tools and apps](#) that instructors can use to assess student performance and provide them with feedback.
- The Chronicle's guide, "[How to Make Smart Choices About Tech for Your Course](#)," by Michelle D. Miller.

- A column from The Hechinger Report, “[Has Video Killed the Red Grading Pen?](#)”
- [MERLOT](#): Part of the California State University system, the acronym stands for Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching. It offers thousands of online-learning materials for educators around the world.

A version of this article appeared in the [November 15, 2019, issue](#).

We welcome your thoughts and questions about this article. Please [email the editors](#) or [submit a letter](#) for publication.

ONLINE LEARNING

INNOVATION & TRANSFORMATION

TECHNOLOGY

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