MEntor Guide to Giving Feedback

Feedback is one of the most powerful tools a mentor has. When done well, it builds confidence, skill, and trust. When done poorly or avoided, it creates fear, confusion, and stalled progress. It’s important to give feedback that teaches, not discourages.

* Feedback is part of the job, not a personal judgment.
* Frequency matters more than formality. Small corrections early prevent big   
  problems later.
* Specific beats general. “Do that this way” is more effective than “be better.”
* Tone teaches as much as content. Calm, direct feedback builds trust.
* Learning mistakes are expected. Safety violations are not.

## Timing

**Give Feedback Immediately If:**

* A safety rule is missed
* A step is skipped or done incorrectly
* A habit is forming (good or bad)

**Give Feedback After the Task If:**

* The apprentice is overwhelmed or frustrated
* The issue is about process or understanding, not immediate risk
* You want them to reflect before responding

## How to Structure Effective Feedback

Use a simple, repeatable structure:

* State what you observed (fact-based)
* Explain why it matters (safety, quality, efficiency)
* Show or explain the correct approach
* Confirm understanding

**Example:**  
*You torqued the wheels before the vehicle was fully lowered. That can throw off the torque reading. Let’s redo it together so you feel the difference. Can you explain the steps back to me?*

## Separating Mistakes From Behavior

**Normal Learning Mistakes**

* Forgetting a step
* Misusing a tool
* Needing repetition to practice
* These should be treated as teaching moments.

**Unacceptable Behaviors**

* Ignoring safety rules
* Arguing instead of listening
* Repeating the same mistake without effort to improve
* These require clear, firmer feedback and possible escalation.

## Encouraging Questions and Honesty

* Regularly remind apprentices that questions are expected
* Thank them when they speak up early
* Respond calmly when mistakes are admitted

It is natural for apprentices to consider hiding their mistakes because they are embarrassed   
or afraid of ridicule. It is critical that mentors and other staff foster an environment where apprentices can be honest and open about their mistakes. How you react to the *first* mistake determines whether they will tell you about the next one.

## Avoiding Common Feedback Mistakes

Do not:

* Correct by taking over the task
* Use sarcasm or embarrassment
* Compare apprentices to other technicians
* Give vague feedback (“you need to focus more”)
* Let frustration dictate tone

These behaviors shut down learning.

## Balancing Encouragement and Correction

Good feedback includes:

* What was done correctly
* What needs improvement
* What success looks like next time

**Example:**  
“Good job following the setup and pulling the spec. Where we need to tighten it up is the measurement step. I noticed you measured the rotor in one spot and wrote it down. Rotor wear isn’t always even, so we measure in at least three points around the rotor and compare to spec. Let’s re-measure it together, and I’ll show you the pattern I use. After we do it, tell me what numbers you got and whether it passes.”

## Checking for Understanding

Never assume understanding. Ask apprentices to:

* Explain the process back to you
* Walk you through their thinking
* Identify what they would do differently next time

This reveals gaps without confrontation.

## Documenting Feedback

* Make brief notes for repeated issues
* Use documentation to track progress, not punish
* Share patterns during 30/60/90-day reviews
* Documentation protects both mentor and apprentice.

## When to Escalate

Escalate concerns when:

* Safety rules are repeatedly ignored
* Attitude becomes defensive or dismissive
* Progress stalls despite coaching
* You feel frustration replacing patience

Escalation is a support tool, not a failure.

Your feedback shapes how apprentices learn to think, not just how they turn wrenches. Calm, consistent, honest feedback builds technicians who are safe, confident, and capable. If giving feedback feels difficult, that’s normal. Avoiding it is far more damaging. Teach early. Correct often. Stay professional.

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