

ACCEPTING FEEDBACK

Teachers are baffled and annoyed when a student looks only at the grade on a paper and ignores substantive comments. Since you'll write many research papers in your life, it's smart to understand how your teachers make their judgments and how you can use them to do better next time.

When you read your teacher's comments, focus on those that you can apply to your next project:

1. Look for a pattern of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. If you see one, make a list so that you know what to work on next time.
2. If your teacher says you made factual errors, check your notes to see why. Did you misreport them? Were you misled by an unreliable source?
3. If your teacher says your writing is choppy, dense, or awkward, check your sentences against the five rules for writing clear sentences.
4. If your teacher says your report is disorganized, check it against the guide to revising your draft.

Next, you should meet with your teacher. Complete these tasks before you talk to your teacher:

1. If your teacher marked up spelling and grammar mistakes, correct those errors.
2. Jot down your responses after any comments about your argument to show that you've read them closely.

In your meeting with the teacher:

1. Don't whine about your grade.
2. Focus on the most important comments. Rehearse your questions so they seem polite.
3. Don't ask, "What didn't you like?" but "Where did I go wrong and how would I fix it?"