

# How To give negative feedback properly

From F. John Reh,

“Jane, you ignorant slut.” No one who heard Dan Ackroyd make that statement on the early *Saturday Night Live* shows had any doubt that he was about to strongly disagree with whatever Jane Curtin had just said. The problem was he was going to disagree not with what was said, but with who said it. That’s not the way to give negative feedback.

## Here's How:

1. **Get your emotions under control.** You don't want to critique someone else's actions when you are angry or upset. You are likely to say something you don't really mean or to react poorly to something that is said to you.
2. **Find a private place.** No one wants to receive negative feedback in front of others. Sometimes it is unavoidable, but that should be a last resort. Take a meeting in your office, call the person into a vacant conference room, step into the lunch room if it is vacant.
3. **Focus on their actions, not on the person.** You create an immediate barrier when you criticize the person. Focus instead on what you want to change. Focus on their performance.
4. **Be specific.** It does no good to tell someone 'you have a bad attitude'. You need to identify specific actions the person took or specific things they said if you want them to understand.
5. **Be timely.** Negative feedback should be given as soon as possible after the event. If you see an employee being rude to a customer, don't wait until their annual performance review to tell them. How many other customers will they have angered in the meantime? Call them into your office right away.
6. **Be calm.** Don't yell and scream. The other person will become defensive and won't hear what you are trying to tell them.
7. **Reaffirm your faith in the person.** This reinforces step three, but here you tell them that you still have faith in them as a person and in their abilities; it's just their performance you want them to change. Say something like "you're a good customer service rep, so I'm sure you see the need to be more patient with customers".
8. **Stop talking.** After you have told the person what specific, recent actions were inappropriate, and why, stop talking. Give the other person a chance to respond to or refute your statements. **Listen** to what they have to say.
9. **Define positive steps.** Agree on what future performance is appropriate for the employee. If there are specific things the employee needs to start doing or needs to stop doing, be sure they are clearly identified. If there is something you need to do, perhaps additional training for the employee, agree on that as well.
10. **Get over it.** After you have given the negative feedback and agreed on a resolution, move on with the job. Don't harbor ill will toward the employee because they made a mistake. Don't hover over them out of fear that they may make another mistake. Monitor their performance as you do all employees, but don't obsess.

## Tips:

1. Giving negative feedback is never easy, but if done properly it isn't unpleasant.

**What You Need:** 1 - A private place; 2 - A calm mind; 3 – Patience; and 4 - Your sense of humor.