



STRATEGIES FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

When I finish a draft, I want to hear how a reader reacts to my thinking and the way I've expressed it. I know from experience that such feedback will help make my next draft clearer and more effective.

But knowing feedback's value doesn't keep me from pushing back against what I'm hearing, from thinking, momentarily, "What's wrong with you that you couldn't follow what I was saying?!"

I'm not proud of this reaction. All who offer me an honest account of his reading give me a great gift. I shouldn't be blaming them. Nor should I be arguing with their experience. And yet, inevitably, for brief (and sometimes not-so-brief) moments, I find myself unable to listen and learn.

Overtime, I've adopted two strategies that help me be more open to learning:

- ◆ First, I make sure that I put space between the act of creation and the moment of feedback. Even stepping away for an hour helps me see my work more objectively. The longer I step away, the better. When I can, I plan these pauses into my project timeline.
- ◆ Second, I identify two or three questions I hope my reader will answer. The questions change depending on where in the process I am and the problem areas I see in the draft, but this practice helps me approach my work more critically. My readers also tell me that the questions help them focus their feedback.

I will likely never extinguish my first, prideful response to feedback. But I also know that without it, I'll stop growing. So I try to embrace inquiry over argument, and open myself more fully to the experience of my friends, colleagues, and strangers. Some days, I'm better at this than others, but I take comfort (and some discomfort) in knowing that I'll have plenty of opportunities to practice and improve.

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