

An illustration of two men in a professional setting. One man, wearing glasses and a blue shirt, is standing and leaning over a desk. The other man, wearing a teal shirt, is sitting at the desk and looking up at the standing man. They appear to be in a collaborative discussion. The background is a simple white wall with a window frame.

100 Effective Feedback Expressions

For ESL Teachers

Express Guides Series



SCORE GUIDES
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Education & Training Solutions



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Overview of the Booklet

This booklet is a practical resource for ESL teachers, TESOL trainees, and language educators to deliver clear, supportive feedback in the classroom. It includes 100 level-appropriate expressions organized into five essential themes: Positive & Encouraging Feedback, Motivational Feedback for Struggling Students, Constructive Feedback for Writing & Speaking, Feedback for Receptive & Language Sub-skills, and Classroom Behavior & Management.

Each theme includes 20 expressions with a realistic scenario showing how the phrases are used in context. A “Let’s Reflect” prompt encourages teachers to apply the expressions mindfully. Designed for pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate learners, this guide helps both new and experienced teachers build more engaging, student-centered ESL classes.

How to Study This Booklet

Before you read the expressions, think about your past online or in-person classes. How did you give feedback—was it to correct mistakes, build confidence, or help students improve?

Each theme starts with a short overview to explain the focus. Read that first, then look through the list of feedback expressions. After that, check the “Let’s Reflect” question to connect the expressions to your own teaching.

Then, read the scenario at the end of each theme. It shows how the expressions are used in a real class. Try using some of these expressions in your future lessons—and enjoy building a more supportive and engaging classroom!

Theme 1

Positive & Encouraging Feedback



Building confidence is key to language learning. These expressions help affirm students' effort, participation, and growth, creating a positive atmosphere where learners feel seen and supported.

Affirm students' effort, progress, participation, and attitude to build confidence.

1. "Excellent work today—your focus really paid off!"
2. "That was a great effort. Keep it up!"
3. "You're getting better every day!"
4. "I really like how you explained your idea."
5. "That's exactly how to do it—well done!"
6. "You used that new vocabulary perfectly!"
7. "Your pronunciation was very clear today!"
8. "That was a very thoughtful answer."
9. "I love how confident you sounded just now."
10. "Your writing is becoming much more organized—good job!"
11. "I can tell you've been practicing—well done!"
12. "That's the kind of participation I love to see!"
13. "I noticed you helped your classmate—thank you!"
14. "Your teamwork made this activity more successful."
15. "That was a strong opening to your presentation!"
16. "That's a fantastic example you shared!"
17. "Well done! You stayed calm and spoke clearly."
18. "Your ideas are very original—keep sharing them."
19. "I appreciate how respectful you were during your classmate's turn."
20. "Very impressive use of grammar in your sentence!"



Let's Reflect

Which three expressions in this theme feel most natural to you—and which one could you start using more often?

Scenario

It's a rainy Thursday afternoon in Vancouver, and Ms. Park's high beginner ESL class is already buzzing with energy. Today's goal is to write a paragraph using the **simple present tense** to describe a daily routine. On the board, she writes: *I wake up. I eat breakfast. I go to school.* She turns to the class with a smile and says, "Repeat after me." After they echo her words, she says, **"Your pronunciation was very clear today!"**

She then reminds them about last week's lesson on paragraph writing. "Remember, we need a topic sentence, some details, and a closing sentence," she explains. She points to an example and asks, "Can anyone tell me which part is the topic sentence?" A student responds confidently. **"That's exactly how to do it—well done!"** Ms. Park replies. She turns to another student who's a bit hesitant but tries anyway. **"That was a great effort. Keep it up!"**

The class begins brainstorming daily activities. Students shout out ideas like "brush my teeth," "go to the gym," and "take the bus." Ms. Park writes them down. **"That's the kind of participation I love to see!"** she says. As students move on to writing, she walks around and notices Mariam is now using full sentences. **"Your writing is becoming much more organized—good job!"** she tells her.

Next, she sees Arman helping his partner with word order. **"I noticed you helped your classmate—thank you!"** she says. In the same group, two others are checking their work together. **"Your teamwork made this activity more successful."** A few students raise their hands to ask about vocabulary. When Diana uses "prepare breakfast" correctly, Ms. Park says, **"You used that new vocabulary perfectly!"**

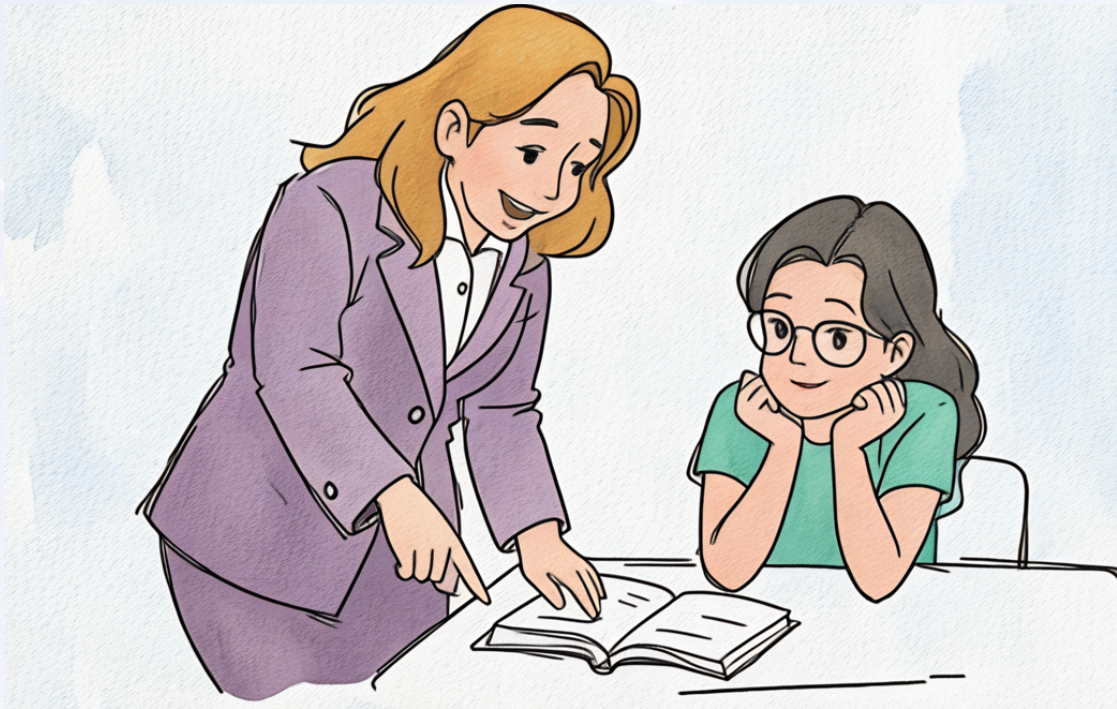
Later, students are invited to read their work aloud. Joon starts with confidence: "I wake up at 7. I make tea for my grandmother..." Ms. Park nods and says, **"That was a strong opening to your presentation!"** Another student, shy but composed, shares a sentence clearly. **"Well done! You stayed calm and spoke clearly."** One student says, "I go to the park because I like fresh air—it helps me think." Ms. Park smiles and says, **"That was a very thoughtful answer."**

Toward the end, she gives individual praise: "Leo, **I can tell you've been practicing—well done!** And Ana, **your ideas are very original—keep sharing them.**" When Samira shares a grammatically correct complex sentence, she hears: **"Very impressive use of grammar in your sentence!"** Finally, when Daniel raises his hand quietly after someone else finishes, she smiles and says, **"I appreciate how respectful you were during your classmate's turn."**

As the bell rings, Ms. Park says, **"You're getting better every day!"** and waves to the class. **"Excellent work today—your focus really paid off!"** Students leave energized and smiling, proud of the progress they made.

Theme 2

Motivational Feedback for Struggling Students



Students facing challenges need more than correction—they need encouragement. These phrases offer emotional support, normalize mistakes, and help learners stay motivated during difficult tasks.

Support and uplift students facing difficulties, helping them stay engaged and resilient.

1. "Don't give up—you're making progress."
2. "It's okay to make mistakes. That's how we learn."
3. "You're not alone—many students find this tricky at first."
4. "Every step you take brings you closer to improvement."
5. "I admire your persistence. Keep going!"
6. "It's totally fine to ask for help—that's being smart."
7. "Mistakes are part of growing. I'm here to support you."
8. "You tried something new today—that's brave."
9. "I can see your confidence growing already."
10. "Let's try this together step by step."
11. "You're improving—just compare your work now to last week!"
12. "This part is hard, but I know you can handle it."
13. "Learning a language takes time—be kind to yourself."
14. "The effort you put in today will pay off tomorrow."
15. "You're not failing—you're still learning."
16. "You're asking the right questions. Keep it up."
17. "Let's look at what you *can* do so far."
18. "Nobody gets it perfect on the first try."
19. "One challenge at a time—we're in this together."
20. "This may feel slow, but you're still moving forward."



Let's Reflect

Which feedback phrases would help build confidence in your quiet or hesitant students during challenging lessons?

Scenario

It's a rainy morning, and Mr. Chen's intermediate ESL class is learning about the **present perfect tense**—a challenging concept for many. He writes examples on the board: *"I have eaten," "She has gone,"* and *"They haven't arrived yet."* After his explanation, he looks around and notices that several students seem overwhelmed. He reassures them, saying, **"You're not alone—many students find this tricky at first."**

He breaks down the form again: *have/has + past participle*. Then he turns to Leo, who's staring blankly at his notes. **"Let's try this together step by step,"** Mr. Chen says gently. As they build a sentence together, he adds, **"It's okay to make mistakes. That's how we learn."** Leo attempts a sentence: "I have... go to school." Mr. Chen corrects it and says, **"You're asking the right questions. Keep it up."**

Next, students try completing sentences using prompts. Mariana puts her head down, clearly discouraged. Mr. Chen kneels beside her and says, **"This part is hard, but I know you can handle it."** He points to one correct answer she completed and says, **"Let's look at what you can do so far."** She tries another sentence. **"You're improving—just compare your work now to last week!"** he says with a smile.

As the activity continues, students begin to slowly gain confidence. Mr. Chen says to the class, **"Nobody gets it perfect on the first try."** He notices Sofia raising her hand, which she rarely does. She quietly asks about irregular past participles. **"It's totally fine to ask for help—that's being smart,"** he replies. **"I admire your persistence. Keep going!"**

When Karim correctly uses "has written" in a sentence after struggling earlier, Mr. Chen says, **"Don't give up—you're making progress."** Then, looking at the entire group, he adds, **"The effort you put in today will pay off tomorrow."** A student whispers, "This is hard..." Mr. Chen nods and responds, **"Learning a language takes time—be kind to yourself."**

At the end of class, students share their final sentences aloud. Mr. Chen notices they sound more confident. **"I can see your confidence growing already."** He claps for one student who tries despite pausing a few times. **"You tried something new today—that's brave."** After collecting the worksheets, he says, **"You're not failing—you're still learning."**

Before they leave, Mr. Chen gestures to their written work on the board. **"Every step you take brings you closer to improvement."** He walks them out with a warm smile. **"This may feel slow, but you're still moving forward."**

Theme 3

Constructive Feedback for Writing & Speaking Skills



Improving writing and speaking requires focused, actionable feedback. These expressions guide students in refining organization, grammar, fluency, and content development step by step.

Focus on content, coherence, organization, fluency, grammar, and idea development.

1. "Your main idea is clear—now try to expand it with more details."
2. "Good start—let's work on organizing your ideas in a clearer order."
3. "Try using transition words to connect your points more smoothly."
4. "This is a strong argument. Can you support it with an example?"
5. "Try speaking a little more slowly to improve your clarity."
6. "I like your introduction. Now let's work on a stronger conclusion."
7. "Let's check your punctuation to make your writing easier to read."
8. "Focus on your verb tenses to make your writing more accurate."
9. "Use linking phrases like 'however' or 'in addition' to join ideas."
10. "This paragraph has a strong topic sentence—great job!"
11. "Try to vary your sentence structures for more interesting writing."
12. "Your ideas are great—now focus on accuracy in grammar."
13. "You paused naturally—now try using stress to emphasize key points."
14. "Can you give a specific example to support this point?"
15. "Let's check your spelling and correct the common errors."
16. "Good use of connectors—keep practicing them in speaking too!"
17. "Let's practice organizing your thoughts before speaking."
18. "You stayed on topic—well done. Now let's add more depth."
19. "Make sure your conclusion restates the main message clearly."
20. "I like how you expressed your opinion—let's now refine your grammar."



Let's Reflect

Which expressions match the types of writing or speaking corrections you give most often? Why do they matter?

Scenario: Writing Focus – Opinion Paragraphs

Students are deep in concentration as Ms. Ahmad places a checklist on each desk. They've just completed their first draft of an opinion paragraph on the topic *"Should students wear uniforms?"* She walks to the whiteboard and says, **"Your main idea is clear—now try to expand it with more details."**

She begins reviewing one student's paper and points to the second paragraph. **"Good start—let's work on organizing your ideas in a clearer order."** The student nods and flips to their outline. Ms. Ahmad highlights the end of the paragraph and says, **"I like your introduction. Now let's work on a stronger conclusion."**

As she moves to another student, she reads aloud a sentence: *"Uniforms are good because same clothes."* She responds kindly, **"Your ideas are great—now focus on accuracy in grammar."** She points to the next line and adds, **"Let's check your punctuation to make your writing easier to read."**

During peer feedback time, students discuss each other's paragraphs. Ms. Ahmad joins one pair and listens to their exchange. One student says, *"Uniforms make everyone equal."* Ms. Ahmad smiles and says, **"This is a strong argument. Can you support it with an example?"** The student thinks and replies, *"Like... no one feels rich or poor."* **"Can you give a specific example to support this point?"** she asks again, encouraging more depth.

When checking another student's paragraph, she says, **"This paragraph has a strong topic sentence—great job!"** and then circles several short, simple sentences. **"Try to vary your sentence structures for more interesting writing."** She notices missing transitions and adds, **"Use linking phrases like 'however' or 'in addition' to join ideas."**

The class begins revising their drafts. Ms. Ahmad walks by and sees someone correcting a sentence: *"Students is happy."* She kneels and says, **"Focus on your verb tenses to make your writing more accurate."** She continues checking another student's spelling sheet. **"Let's check your spelling and correct the common errors."**

As students prepare to submit, she says, **"Make sure your conclusion restates the main message clearly."** Then she smiles and adds to one student, **"I like how you expressed your opinion—let's now refine your grammar."** The bell rings, and students hand in their drafts with a clearer sense of how to improve.

Theme 4

Constructive Feedback for Receptive & Language Sub-Skills



Listening, reading, grammar, and pronunciation all demand targeted attention. These expressions help teachers support accuracy, comprehension, and language awareness in meaningful, student-friendly ways.

Guide students in comprehension, accuracy, vocabulary use, pronunciation clarity, and grammar control.

1. "You understood the main idea well—now try to find supporting details."
2. "Try listening for tone and emotion to better understand the speaker."
3. "You recognized most vocabulary—great work! Let's learn a few new words from the passage."
4. "Let's review that grammar point together—it's a tricky one."
5. "Let's work on intonation—try raising your voice slightly at the end of the question."
6. "Try breaking big words into smaller syllables to improve pronunciation."
7. "Great job using that new vocabulary word in context!"
8. "Let's practice linking sounds in fast speech—it makes listening easier."
9. "You understood the gist—now let's focus on the finer details."
10. "Make sure to scan the text before reading it in full—it saves time."
11. "Let's work on stress patterns—emphasizing the right syllable improves clarity."
12. "You caught the overall message—nice! Let's find some evidence to support it."
13. "Let's go over that sentence together—it's almost correct!"
14. "Good eye for spotting the grammar error. Now explain *why* it's incorrect."
15. "Make sure to double-check your verb forms for accuracy."
16. "You matched the words correctly—great. Now use them in a sentence."
17. "Try listening to short clips more than once for better understanding."
18. "You found the correct answer, but let's talk about *how* you found it."
19. "Try reading aloud to improve both pronunciation and fluency."
20. "You corrected yourself—that shows real awareness. Keep it up!"



Let's Reflect

Think of a student who struggles with grammar, listening, or vocabulary. Which 2–3 expressions from this theme would support them best?

Scenario: Listening & Pronunciation Practice (Intermediate Level)

Students are gathered around their listening guides as Mr. Stone cues up an audio clip of a conversation between two friends planning a trip. Before playing it, he reminds them, **“Try listening for tone and emotion to better understand the speaker.”** They listen once and complete a gist question. He smiles and says, **“You understood the gist—now let’s focus on the finer details.”**

He replays part of the clip, asking students to write down key phrases. Afterward, he turns to Samira and says, **“Try listening to short clips more than once for better understanding.”** Another student, Leo, picks the right answer but can’t explain why. Mr. Stone says, **“You found the correct answer, but let’s talk about how you found it.”**

Next, he leads a vocabulary review. “Circle any words you don’t know,” he says. After students identify a few unfamiliar terms, he points out, **“You recognized most vocabulary—great work! Let’s learn a few new words from the passage.”** After a vocabulary-matching activity, he smiles and says, **“You matched the words correctly—great. Now use them in a sentence.”**

Then, they practice pronunciation. Mr. Stone models a few challenging words. **“Try breaking big words into smaller syllables to improve pronunciation,”** he explains, helping them say “responsibility” and “availability.” He listens to group practice and says, **“Let’s work on stress patterns—emphasizing the right syllable improves clarity.”** He follows up with, **“Let’s work on intonation—try raising your voice slightly at the end of the question.”**

Students do a short listening and repeat exercise using fast speech. Mr. Stone says, **“Let’s practice linking sounds in fast speech—it makes listening easier.”** As a few students correct themselves while reading aloud, he says encouragingly, **“You corrected yourself—that shows real awareness. Keep it up!”** One student reads with clarity. Mr. Stone responds, **“Try reading aloud to improve both pronunciation and fluency.”**

To wrap up the lesson, he says, **“You caught the overall message—nice! Let’s find some evidence to support it.”** Then he points to a question: *“What does the speaker feel about the trip?”* He says, **“You understood the main idea well—now try to find supporting details.”** The students return to their notes feeling more confident and aware of how they listen and speak.

Theme 5

Feedback for Classroom Behavior & Management



Positive classroom management shapes respectful and cooperative learning spaces. These expressions help reinforce good behavior, teamwork, and responsibility in a supportive, non-punitive way.

Encourage respectful behavior, participation, time management, and teamwork in a supportive way.

1. "Thank you for staying focused during the activity."
2. "I appreciate how you waited patiently for your turn."
3. "Great teamwork! You collaborated really well."
4. "You stayed on task the entire time—excellent discipline."
5. "Nice job following the classroom rules today."
6. "I noticed you helped your partner—thank you for being supportive."
7. "Thanks for being respectful while your classmate was speaking."
8. "You stayed calm and handled that situation maturely."
9. "Well done for using your time wisely."
10. "You showed great leadership in that group activity."
11. "You raised your hand and waited—perfect classroom behavior."
12. "That was a great example of staying respectful during a disagreement."
13. "Thank you for being so responsible with your materials."
14. "I saw that you stayed quiet when others were presenting—nice job!"
15. "Great job staying seated and listening carefully."
16. "Your behavior helped keep the class calm and focused."
17. "I noticed you kept your phone away—thank you for respecting the rule."
18. "You showed great self-control today."
19. "I appreciate how you reminded your group to stay focused."
20. "That was a great example of respectful communication."



Let's Reflect

Which expressions from this section would help you reinforce respectful and responsible behavior more consistently?

Scenario: Speaking & Role Play Lesson (Intermediate Level)

Mr. Thompson is guiding his ESL students through a role play activity where they practice polite disagreement in everyday situations. As he explains the instructions, students listen quietly and stay seated. He nods and says, **“Great job staying seated and listening carefully.”** When the activity begins, he reminds them to take turns speaking. One student, Mina, waits as her classmate finishes. **“I appreciate how you waited patiently for your turn,”** he tells her.

As the role plays begin, Mr. Thompson walks around the room and observes students using calm tones, even when disagreeing. **“That was a great example of respectful communication,”** he says to one pair. In another role play, a group remains composed despite a minor misunderstanding. He compliments them: **“You stayed calm and handled that situation maturely.”**

In one group, Jamal reminds his team to stay focused and refer to the script. Mr. Thompson says, **“I appreciate how you reminded your group to stay focused.”** Another student, Aisha, kindly helps a classmate with a line he forgot. **“I noticed you helped your partner—thank you for being supportive.”** Nearby, Sofia manages the conversation and keeps it balanced. Mr. Thompson nods, **“You showed great leadership in that group activity.”**

After the first round, he says, **“Thank you for staying focused during the activity.”** He sees that most groups are staying on task and communicating well. **“Great teamwork! You collaborated really well.”** When he checks in with Elena, she mentions she set a timer to manage her group’s time. He responds, **“Well done for using your time wisely.”**

As presentations continue, Mr. Thompson observes quiet attention from the audience. He tells the class, **“I saw that you stayed quiet when others were presenting—nice job!”** and adds, **“Thanks for being respectful while your classmate was speaking.”** One group finishes the task without distraction. He praises them: **“You stayed on task the entire time—excellent discipline.”**

Later, he overhears a short disagreement about who should present first. The students solve it with calm discussion. Mr. Thompson says, **“That was a great example of staying respectful during a disagreement.”** He turns to the class and says, **“Nice job following the classroom rules today.”** As students put their phones away and prepare to leave, he says, **“I noticed you kept your phone away—thank you for respecting the rule.”**

Before they leave, Mr. Thompson says warmly, **“You showed great self-control today,”** and to the class as a whole: **“Your behavior helped keep the class calm and focused.”** He ends with a smile: **“That was a productive session—thank you for your respectful and responsible participation.”**

Alphabetical List

Can you give a specific example to support this point?
Don't give up—you're making progress.
Every step you take brings you closer to improvement.
Excellent work today—your focus really paid off!
Focus on your verb tenses to make your writing more accurate.
Good eye for spotting the grammar error. Now explain why it's incorrect.
Good start—let's work on organizing your ideas in a clearer order.
Good use of connectors—keep practicing them in speaking too!
Great job staying seated and listening carefully.
Great teamwork! You collaborated really well.
I admire your persistence. Keep going!
I appreciate how respectful you were during your classmate's turn.
I appreciate how you reminded your group to stay focused.
I appreciate how you waited patiently for your turn.
I can see your confidence growing already.
I like how you expressed your opinion—let's now refine your grammar.
I like your introduction. Now let's work on a stronger conclusion.
I love how confident you sounded just now.
I noticed you helped your classmate—thank you!
I noticed you helped your partner—thank you for being supportive.
I noticed you kept your phone away—thank you for respecting the rule.
It's okay to make mistakes. That's how we learn.
It's totally fine to ask for help—that's being smart.
Keep it up!
Learning a language takes time—be kind to yourself.
Let's check your punctuation to make your writing easier to read.
Let's check your spelling and correct the common errors.
Let's go over that sentence together—it's almost correct!
Let's look at what you can do so far.
Let's practice linking sounds in fast speech—it makes listening easier.
Let's practice organizing your thoughts before speaking.
Let's review that grammar point together—it's a tricky one.
Let's try this together step by step.
Let's work on intonation—try raising your voice slightly at the end of the question.
Let's work on stress patterns—emphasizing the right syllable improves clarity.
Mistakes are part of growing. I'm here to support you.
Make sure to double-check your verb forms for accuracy.
Make sure your conclusion restates the main message clearly.
Nobody gets it perfect on the first try.
One challenge at a time—we're in this together.
That was a great effort. Keep it up!
That was a great example of respectful communication.
That was a great example of staying respectful during a disagreement.
That was a strong opening to your presentation!
That's a fantastic example you shared!
That's exactly how to do it—well done!
That's the kind of participation I love to see!
Thank you for being so responsible with your materials.

Thank you for staying focused during the activity.
Thanks for being respectful while your classmate was speaking.
This is a strong argument. Can you support it with an example?
This may feel slow, but you're still moving forward.
This paragraph has a strong topic sentence—great job!
This part is hard, but I know you can handle it.
Try breaking big words into smaller syllables to improve pronunciation.
Try listening for tone and emotion to better understand the speaker.
Try listening to short clips more than once for better understanding.
Try reading aloud to improve both pronunciation and fluency.
Try speaking a little more slowly to improve your clarity.
Try to vary your sentence structures for more interesting writing.
Try using transition words to connect your points more smoothly.
Use linking phrases like 'however' or 'in addition' to join ideas.
Very impressive use of grammar in your sentence!
Well done for using your time wisely.
Well done! You stayed calm and spoke clearly.
You asked the right questions—keep it up.
You caught the overall message—nice! Let's find some evidence to support it.
You corrected yourself—that shows real awareness. Keep it up!
You found the correct answer, but let's talk about how you found it.
You helped your partner—thank you for being supportive.
You improved—just compare your work now to last week!
You matched the words correctly—great. Now use them in a sentence.
You paused naturally—now try using stress to emphasize key points.
You raised your hand and waited—perfect classroom behavior.
You recognized most vocabulary—great work! Let's learn a few new words from the passage.
You showed great leadership in that group activity.
You showed great self-control today.
You stayed calm and handled that situation maturely.
You stayed on task the entire time—excellent discipline.
You stayed on topic—well done. Now let's add more depth.
You tried something new today—that's brave.
You understood the gist—now let's focus on the finer details.
You understood the main idea well—now try to find supporting details.
You used that new vocabulary perfectly!
You're asking the right questions. Keep it up.
You're getting better every day!
You're improving—just compare your work now to last week!
You're not alone—many students find this tricky at first.
You're not failing—you're still learning.
Your behavior helped keep the class calm and focused.
Your ideas are great—now focus on accuracy in grammar.
Your ideas are very original—keep sharing them.
Your main idea is clear—now try to expand it with more details.
Your pronunciation was very clear today!
Your teamwork made this activity more successful.
Your writing is becoming much more organized—good job!



Booklet Overview

This booklet features 100 classroom-tested feedback expressions across five key themes—designed to help ESL teachers motivate, support, and guide learners with clarity and confidence. With realistic scenarios and reflection prompts, it's a simple yet powerful tool for building more supportive, student-centered classrooms.

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