

5 RULES OF RECEIVING

FEEDBACK

So you've posted original content for D&D 5e that you want others to give you feedback on? That's great! Here are a few simple rules to help you navigate the process...

RULE 1: BE OPEN TO ANYTHING

Different people have different aptitudes and perceptions. It might be that you really want comments on a certain feature but people are just correcting your grammar or spelling. It could be that you really wanted to hear praise but instead you're hearing pretty hard critique. It could even be that you really wanted to hear critique and critical engagement but all you're getting is praise! When you go into the process of getting feedback you have to accept that you aren't in control of the feedback you get.

What you will also have to accept is that the feedback you're getting is likely based on your blind spots and areas of weakness as a writer / designer. This rule doesn't mean that you have to take every piece of feedback as the gospel truth and change your work accordingly but it does mean that you should take all feedback seriously.

RULE 2: ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT

While there is sometimes a clear give away that someone is trolling you or being rude for no particular discernible reason, you should always assume positive intent. A mental trick that might be helpful is to imagine a friend you trust giving you the feedback in their voice. This will help you reduce any defensiveness you might have or natural inclination to read a negative tone into feedback that doesn't have it.

Getting feedback can be a sensitive subject by its very nature. You're asking people to critique something you care about and it's easy to see those comments as disparaging. Resist that urge.

RULE 3: BE THANKFUL!

No matter what feedback you get, you say, "thanks for your feedback". Doesn't matter if you loved what they said, hated what they said, thought they could have been more delicate, thought they were abrasive, or whatever else - thank them for their time.

They are doing you a favor by giving you commentary on your piece. You may not love what they have to say but you should appreciate that they took the time to say it. There are a lot of people out there that would love to see your final product but don't have the ability or interest in providing you the perspective necessary for it to get there - thank those people that will.

RULE 4: ASK QUESTIONS

Sometimes you need more information about a particular piece of feedback. This could be because the original piece of feedback is too vague for you to understand how to implement it or it could be because you don't understand the context of the feedback. For instance, if someone says, "this feature is really overpowered" you might ask, "Can you tell me what you think it's overpowered compared to?".

You should be careful when you are asking questions that you are trying to frame them to generate a positive dialogue and not to demean the feedback or the person giving it. Once you have given a piece of your work over for feedback your role shifts from designer to investigator. Your role after the piece is out there to explore why people think what they do, gather as much information as you can, and compare the most popular and repeated opinions against your own observations. Once you've collected all this data, then shift back into your designer role.

RULE 5: FOLLOW UP

Once you have made your decisions about changes based on the feedback, follow up with the people who provided feedback. I especially recommend highlighting how feedback they suggested was incorporated into the new draft. In the past, I have reached out to people who had provided feedback that led to contentious discussion and shared how I included their feedback. Try it! It's humbling, for sure, but that's good for you as a designer and it's going to improve your ability to take feedback in the future.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE, YOU MIGHT STILL HAVE TO FIX IT

Sometimes you know for a fact a feature, trait, or mechanic is balanced but you keep getting feedback that it's an unbalanced option to put in the game. Explain your reasoning, cite examples from the canon material, and then keep listening - don't argue. It doesn't matter that your idea is perfectly balanced if no one agrees with you. When that happens, it's better to revisit and revise the mechanic in question then to stubbornly stick to your guns.

AND THAT'S IT!

The point of asking for feedback is for the material to get better, not to feel better about yourself. If you find your taking feedback personally or getting into arguments with people, give yourself a break and spend some time doing something else. The feedback will still be there for you the next day when you're feeling more receptive.

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