FORWARD WITH FEEDBACK

Formulating effective feedback through a standard routine.

Participants
Class

Design skill
Share ideas

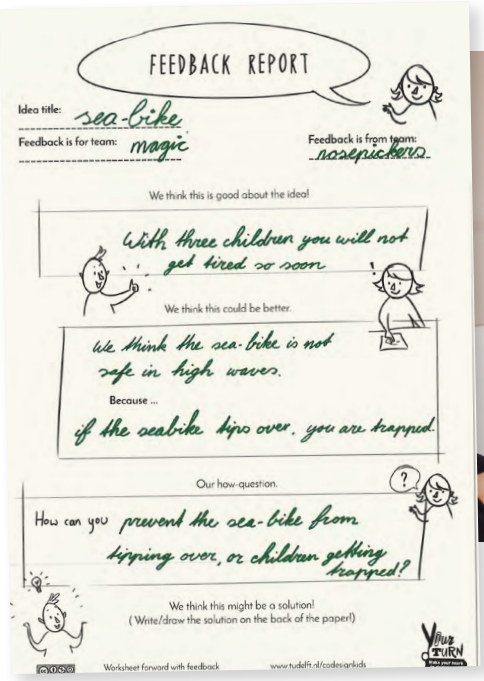
Prior design experience
Average

Duration
60 minutes

Design step
Generating concepts

Description

Participants provide each other with feedback through a standard routine. One design team presents their idea. Other participants can then ask questions for clarification. These questions are solely for information and should not contain compliments or criticism.
Once the design team have answered questions, the other groups write their feedback on the feedback report worksheet. They comment on specific qualities of the idea. They comment on what could be improved through a 'This could be better'- statement and a 'How can you'-question. The formulation of statements and questions is important.

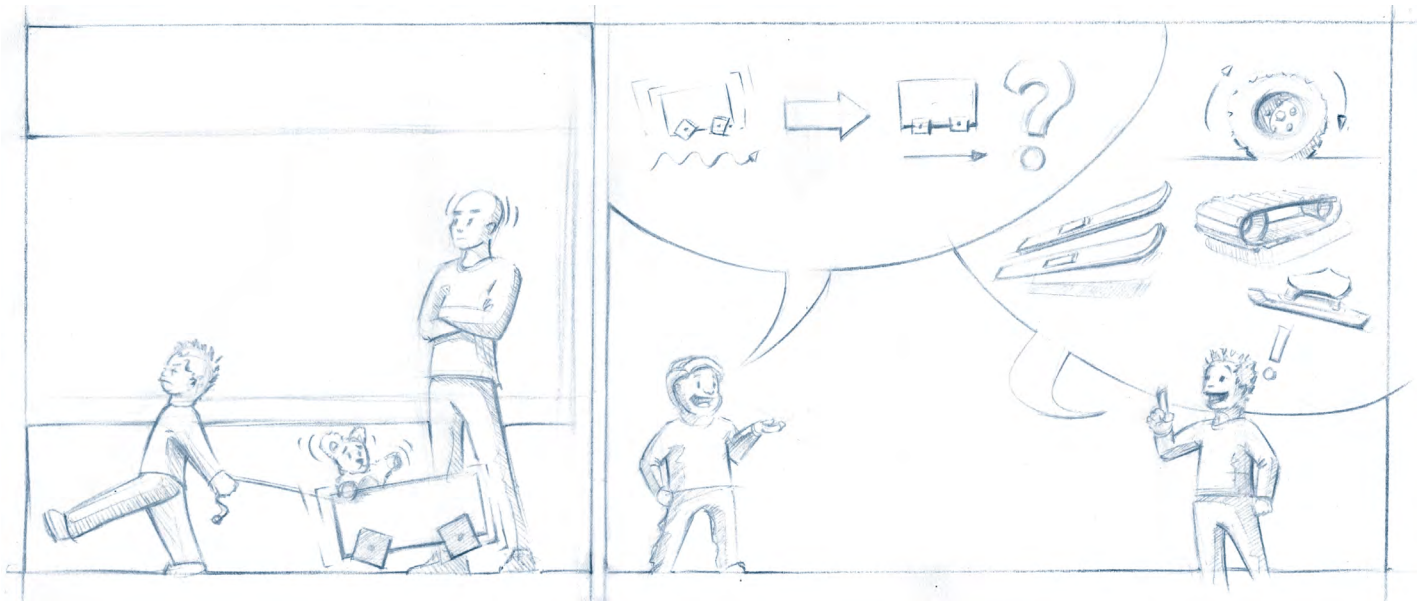


In the next session, each design team receives the completed feedback worksheets. Each team reads and discusses the feedback. The design team then selects two 'How can you'-questions for further development.

Effect

Giving and receiving good feedback during a design process is not always easy. Because participants are enthusiastic about their own design, they can easily feel criticized and respond defensively. Through the feedback routine, participants become open to the feedback and it helps them to come up with new solutions.

Without the Forward with feedback *With the Forward with feedback*



Example

Mila, Peter and Ezra are designing a milk carton opener for James, an arthritis patient. They presented their best idea to the class yesterday. Peter thought the presentation went well, because their classmates hadn't asked many questions. It appeared that their idea was clear. The teacher gives them the completed feedback forms and they read them to each other. They now have to choose two forms to continue with. There are potential areas for improvement from all of the forms. Ultimately, they choose the forms with suggestions that will benefit James the most. They start to come up with solutions for the 'How can you' questions and immediately start to improve the milk carton opener.

Step by step

1. Explain to the participants that giving and receiving feedback is important in a design process. Ask the participants about their own experiences, for example:
   - Do you give each other feedback on other subjects (e.g. Tips and Tops)?
   - What do you use feedback for?
   - When is feedback good feedback?
   - What do you need to know to give good feedback?
   - What are important skills for giving feedback?
   - What are important skills for receiving feedback?

2. Complete the feedback report with the whole group using a 'wrong' example, see below. Practice how to give a compliment first. Then practice using the 'This could be better, because …' statements. Then formulate a 'How can you' question with the whole group. Make sure that this question is an indication of a goal and offers room for a variety of solutions. Make sure everyone understands.

3. Have the teams take turns presenting an idea they want to receive feedback for.

4. Have the group (and the external client if present) ask clarification questions, such as 'What is the opener made of?', 'Can you explain again?'. Compliments, criticism and discussions are not permitted.

5. Have the participants (and the client) complete the Feedback report worksheet in pairs or as a design team. If necessary, give a participant or the client the opportunity to read out their feedback. The receiving team is then only asked 'Do you understand the feedback?'

6. In the next session, give the design teams the Feedback report worksheets that have been completed for their ideas. Have them read and discuss it with each other. Let each team select two Feedback worksheets for further development.

7. Later, in their final presentation of their design, ask the participants about the feedback and the improvements that were made because of it.

Wrong examples for practicing

Mila has made a milk carton opener for James, an arthritis patient. Jake sees the design and tells Lisa: 'This is not possible. It is too hard to use for James.' Jake thinks of a clear point for improvement but does not explain it properly. In addition, his feedback is not pleasant for Mila to hear.

Through the feedback routine, Jake's feedback is now phrased as follows:

(This could be better)	'James still can't use the opener easily,
(because)	because it is too hard for him to push the opener into the carton.
(How can you)	How can you make it easier for James to get the opener into the carton?'

Not: 'Doesn't the milk spoil very quickly? A milk carton should have a cap!'
But: 'It's good that the opener is lightweight. But it would be better if you could close the milk carton, because the milk spoils quickly. How can you ensure that the milk carton can be closed close again?'

Not: 'James still can't pour the milk himself; I think. You should make a type of crane that lifts the carton which can be controlled with a remote control! That is cool!'
But: 'It's good that the opener is lightweight. But James still can't pour his milk himself, because the carton is too heavy for him. How can you ensure that James can pour the milk by himself?'

Tips

- A team can either respond defensively to questions or quickly come up with solutions. Make them aware that it does not matter if participants do not know the answers to all questions. During the design process it is helpful to know what details are not clear and what can be improved. Participants will be able to help each other with this.

- Make sure the feedback is concrete and supported by an argument. This has added value for the recipient.

- Split larger groups so that there is sufficient time for presentations from each team.

Materials

- Presentation materials of the design idea
- Worksheet 'Feedback report'

References

The development of the 'how' question is based upon research by Alice Schut and on Eris' question-driven design model:

- Schut, A., Klapwijk, R. M., Gielen, M., & de Vries, M. (2019). Children's Responses to Divergent and Convergent Design Feedback. Design and Technology Education: an International Journal, 24(2), 67-89.

- Schut, A., Van Mechelen, M., Klapwijk, R. M., Gielen, M. & De Vries, M. J. (accepted), Towards Constructive Design Feedback Dialogues: Guiding Peer and Client Feedback to Stimulate Children's Creative Thinking, International Journal of Technology and Design Education.

FEEDBACK REPORT

Idea title:

_____

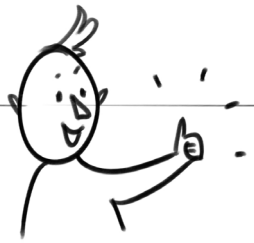
Feedback is for team:

_____

Feedback is from team:

_____

We think this is good about the idea!



We think this could be better.

Because ...

Our how-question.

How can you

We think this might be a solution!
(Write/draw the solution on the back of the paper!)

Your Turn
Make your mark in design