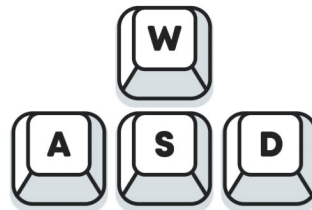


LEVEL 2: INTERPERSONAL

WASD MODEL

LEVEL UP YOUR FEEDBACK



The WASD Model for Feedback Conversations

Most feedback conversations fail not because leaders don't care, but because they skip steps or avoid the conversation altogether. A simple framework can help you know what to say and give you the confidence to say it.

The WASD Model works for both constructive feedback (when something needs to change) and recognition (when you want to reinforce what's working). Just like in games, we can use familiar controls to navigate these conversations with clarity and care.

THE GOAL

Approach feedback conversations prepared and confident



WHY

Start with your intent. "I want to talk about how we can communicate effectively when deadlines are approaching" lands differently than "We need to talk."



ABOUT

Be specific. Not "your communication needs work." Instead, "You missed two deadlines this week without giving anyone a heads up."



SIGNIFICANCE

Explain the impact. "When deadlines slip without warning, the team downstream can't plan. If we'd known earlier, we could have adjusted."



DIALOGUE

Ask an open-ended question and listen with genuine curiosity. "What can you do differently next time, and how can I support you?"

Before you press WASD, check your SPACE:

Is this the right time and place? Are you approaching with curiosity, not judgment? Some attention to the space (both physical and emotional) will help create a psychologically safe and productive conversation.

EXAMPLE: CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Situation: A team member has been consistently late to morning standups, which delays the team's ability to coordinate work.

W - Why "I want to talk about how we can make sure our standups work for everyone on the team."

A - About "You've been 10-15 minutes late to standup three times this week."

S - Significance "When you arrive late, we either start without you and you miss context, or we wait and the whole team loses time. Either way, it affects our ability to coordinate."

D - Dialogue "What's getting in the way of making it on time, and what do you need from me or the team to make this work better?"

Notes: Notice that the feedback is specific (three times this week, 10-15 minutes), the impact is clear (team coordination suffers), and the dialogue opens space for problem-solving rather than defensiveness. You're not assuming intent. You're naming observable behavior and its impact, then inviting collaboration.

EXAMPLE: RECOGNITION/REINFORCING FEEDBACK

Situation: A team member proactively flagged a potential bug during code review that would have caused a major issue in production.

W - Why "I want to take a minute to talk about what happened in yesterday's code review."

A - About "You caught that edge case in the inventory system that would have broken the player economy if it had shipped."

S - Significance "That save prevented a potential rollback and hours of emergency work for the team. It also shows you're thinking about the bigger system, not just your own feature."

D - Dialogue "What helped you spot that, and how can we make sure that kind of thinking happens more consistently across the team?"

Notes: Recognition works best when it's specific and connects behavior to impact. Your **Developer** knows that reinforcing what's working helps people grow just as much as addressing what's not. The dialogue question invites the person to reflect on their process and potentially share knowledge with the team.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Use these prompts to practice applying the WASD model to your own situations:

1. Think of a recent situation where you avoided giving feedback. What made it difficult? How might WASD have helped you structure the conversation?
2. Identify someone on your team who's doing something well that you haven't acknowledged. How would you use WASD to recognize their contribution?
3. Consider a recurring issue that affects team performance. How would you use WASD to address it without making it feel like an attack?