



## How To Make The Most of Confusing Feedback

Ever been frustrated by vague, subjective feedback from a judge or teacher?

"Just blow tone!"

"Just hold the low As at the end of bar 1 more."

"Play it with a bit more swagger!"

Huh?! I think we'd all agree those are pretty ambiguous comments to try to act on. What does blow tone mean? Hold the low A how much more? And how on earth are you supposed to know where to start with adjusting your technique to add swagger?

Only things that can be measured can be improved. So we need to find ways to get an objective, pass-or-fail result when we're working on progressing.

If you do get some of that vague, subjective feedback, wherever possible you should ask for specifics or transform it into clear objectives yourself by breaking it down into concrete elements you can focus on one by one.

If you're working on rhythm, you could count and hope you're hitting the beat... or you could record yourself clapping to a metronome. This is an objective measure – a metronome leaves no room for ambiguity, and on listening back, you can clearly say "yes, I was on the beat" or "no, I didn't quite hit that one".

If you're trying to improve the steadiness of your blowing, you could try to listen while you're playing or go by whether it feels steady... or you could plug a drone into a manometer, watch the water rise and fall with your breathing cycle, and know whether you're within a half-inch of the sweet spot, or you're not.

Objectivity paves the route to mastery. Whereas subjectivity shrouds that route in a dense, impossible-to-navigate fog.

So, focus on what you can objectively verify during practice sessions.

Making these kinds of adjustments isn't just a step towards better performance; it's a step towards understanding your music on a deeper level.

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