Characteristics of effective feedback:

Begin by discussing the learner's assessment of performance: Obtaining the learners assessment of their performance in accomplishing the relevant goals can help guide the content of feedback given

Well timed and expected: It is most effective when given as soon as possible after the behavior, depending upon the receiver's readiness to hear comments on performance. If the behavior is distant from the feedback, the receiver is more likely to discount the feedback as inaccurate. If immediate, denial is more difficult.

Descriptive: Feedback should describe the behavior in clear terms and should reflect specific, concrete examples of positive or negative behaviors.

"When the patient was discussing her fears about death you quickly moved to another question without stopping to explore her feelings or concerns" is more effective than presenting an interpretation such as "you are afraid to talk about death aren't you?" or a generalization such as "you interrupted the patient all the time."

Positive feedback should be descriptive as well. "Your use of silence when she was crying allowed her to gather her feelings and express her frustrations."   Focus on reporting accurately what was observed in behavioral terms and avoid interrupting or making assumptions about intent.

Changeable behavior: Focus on specific action and behavior instead of personality. "Using a transition statement when shifting between topics is helpful" as opposed to "you seemed awkward when changing topics." In addition, avoid labeling behaviors as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong."

Limit the amount of feedback: Comment on one or two important items rather than two major items and four minor items. The feedback will be more effective if the learner can focus on a few specific areas for improvement.

Order the content of feedback: When giving both supportive and constructive feedback, it is important to start by giving some of the supportive feedback initially, followed by the constructive feedback. This helps to minimize defensiveness and makes it easier for the learner to hear the constructive feedback.

Beneficial to receiver - Feedback should help the learner explore ways in which improve his or her performance. Leaving the session with a plan for improvement is often beneficial.