Quiz

1) Which of these sentences is a move from positive to negative?

a. I like the painting. But actually, I think the colours are a little too bright for this room.
b. I'm afraid I really don't like it. It's truly awful.
c. I love the book. It's one of the best things I've ever read.

2) _____ a first attempt, it looks really good.

a. If
b. For
c. When

3) Perhaps a _____ of this project is a lack of time.

a. weak
b. weaken
c. weakness
Answers

1) a

2) b

3) c
How to

William

Hello and welcome to How To! My name is William Kremer. Imagine that you are a manager in a company and a member of your team asks you to look at something she's prepared. You'll probably see some things that you like and some things that you don't like, but what's the best way to discuss these points? How can you show your team member that you like some things but not others?

We're going to hear some clips from a conversation. Don't worry if you don't understand everything the first time you hear the clips: I'll play the important bits again. You'll hear Claire, and her boss, Mark. Claire has asked Mark to look at her design for a new webpage and he is telling her his thoughts. In this first clip, Mark starts off by saying what he likes about Claire's webpage: he says, 'The photo is great,' but then he signals that he has a doubt about it too. Listen carefully:

EXAMPLE

Mark
And we have this photo of the challenger. And that brings the webpage alive to users, so the photo's great. They can see that and go, Oh, that's really interesting, but actually there's nothing they can do with that. So it is just an image; there's nothing to click on or - there's no interactivity.

Claire
Uh-huh.

William
But actually there's nothing they can do with that. So it is just an image.

EXAMPLE
But actually there's nothing they can do with that. So it is just an image.

William
Saying but actually shows that Mark is going to move from talking about things he likes to things that he doesn't like as much. These words could also be used to show the opposite - that someone is moving from a negative to a positive comment, like this:
EXAMPLE
So, I'm not sure I like the design, but actually I think the concept is very strong.

William
Let's hear a couple of other ways that you can signal a move from positive to negative or from negative to positive:

EXAMPLES

Voice 1
On the other hand, it is just an image.

Voice 2
On the other hand, it is just an image.

Voice 1
Then again, it is just an image.

Voice 2
Then again, it is just an image.

William
Notice that lack of contraction. Mark doesn't say, It's just an image, he says, It is just an image. This extra emphasis signals a contrast in feeling and acts to balance what Mark said before about liking the image.

Now you might know another way of adding emphasis to what you say. This is to insert the verb do. Listen to this:

EXAMPLE
I really like the photo, but it does distract the user from the link.

William
In that example, the speaker doesn't say, I really like the photo but it distracts the user from the link, he says, It does distract

EXAMPLE
I really like the photo, but it does distract the user from the link.

William
Adding emphasis is one way to signal a contrast and to balance the positive
against the negative.
Now, there are some more obvious ways of moving from the positive to the negative and back again. In the following clip, Mark says that one aspect of Claire's design is a real plus, so it's something that he really likes. However, it is also one of the weaknesses. Listen:

**EXAMPLE**

**Mark**
So, the way that you're giving people opportunities and options to get access to any of the content I think is a real plus.

**Claire**
Good

**Mark**
Interestingly though, I also think that it's probably one of the weaknesses.

**Claire**
Oh.

**Mark**
On here as well.

**Claire**
Right.

**Mark**
Erm, because you've given the same weighting.

**William**
Mark thinks it's a real plus, but he also thinks it's probably one of the weaknesses.

**EXAMPLE**
I think is a real plus. Interestingly though, I also think that it's probably one of the weaknesses.

**William**
So it's possible to talk quite openly about the strengths or weaknesses of something. Listen to this:
**EXAMPLE**
On the positive side, I think it's a really nice image and a nice layout; but on the negative side, it is a bit confusing.

**William**
On the positive side. But on the negative side.

Let's just end with a quick look at how you can be positive but also imply that you have one or two doubts. In the following clip, Mark makes the point that this was one of Claire's first projects:

**EXAMPLE**

**Mark**
You know - I know this is, like, one of your first projects and I think, you know, looking at it and looking at it in terms of a first project, I think it's great the way that you've pulled so many things together.

**William**
Looking at it in terms of a first project, I think it's great. So Mark is saying that Claire's design is very good when he remembers that it's her first project. In terms of a first project.

**EXAMPLE**

**Mark**
Looking at it and looking at it in terms of a first project, I think it's great.

**William**
Another way of doing this - of giving qualified praise - is to use the word for:

**EXAMPLE**
For a first project, I think it's great.

**William**
For a first project, I think it's great.

So now that you've expressed your opinion about your team-member's work, it's time to make a few suggestions for changes. But that is a topic for another episode of How To. Don't forget that you can read more about the language in
today's programme on the How To webpage on bbcleareningenglish.com. Goodbye!