



The Mentor – Mentee Relationship

Office for Alumni Affairs & Career Advancement

Here are some general guidelines and tips describing the mentor-mentee relationship. Realize that the roles, responsibilities, and outcomes may vary just as individuals and the situations vary.

MENTOR ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND BENEFITS:

The mentor's role is to teach, guide and help shape the professional growth and learning of the mentee and to serve as a positive role model.

Mentor responsibilities:

- Shares information about his/her background, skills and interests
- Tells mentee how he/she can help
- Listens actively
- Serves as a positive role model
- Helps mentee set educational/career goals
- Provides encouragement for building self-confidence and self-esteem
- Offers mentee constructive and meaningful advice and feedback
- Celebrates milestones and achievements with mentee
- Acts as a resource for information about careers
- Educates mentee on workplace expectations

Benefits of mentoring for the mentor:

- Demonstrates expertise and shares knowledge
- Opportunity to build leadership skills
- Enhances skills in coaching, counseling, listening and modeling
- Contributes to the professional development of a student
- Gains insights and different perspectives from future members of the profession
- Gives back to the community
- Builds relationships with potential interns and new hires for organization

Ground rules: Be respectful of time and **always** show appreciation!

MENTEE ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND BENEFITS:

The mentees role is to seek guidance and constructive feedback on his/her professional development and career goals.

Mentee Responsibilities:

- Takes responsibility for keeping in regular contact with mentor and actively participates in the relationship
- Assesses academic/professional strengths, learning and developmental needs, values and short and long-term career goals
- Develops a plan with mentor for achieving these goals
- Follows through on commitments and goals
- Respects the mentor's time
- Maintains confidentiality at all times
- Openly shares successes and failures
- Is receptive to feedback and coaching
- Takes advantage of opportunities presented by the mentor

Benefits of mentoring for the mentee:

- Assistance in defining career goals, strategies and outcomes
- Develops a meaningful professional relationship with mentor
- Increases professional connections and network
- Gains knowledge of workplace expectations
- Builds self-advocacy skills and confidence to be successful
- Access to potential internships and job opportunities

Successful mentor/mentee relationships: Both parties are engaged, flexible, authentic and there is reciprocity.

HOW TO ASK SOMEONE TO BE YOUR MENTOR

Asking someone to be your mentor can be daunting, but just remember that people are usually flattered if they are asked. Although there are many ways to ask someone to be your mentor, here are some dos and don'ts that may help:

Do...

Communicate what you respect about him/her – It shows that you know why you would like them to be your mentor. Be sincere - genuine praise also goes a long way. Try to find reasons that demonstrate that you've really thought about this. For example, a reason could be something like this: "I really respect how you handle work life balance while holding such a senior position."

Communicate your situation and how their mentorship can help – People become mentors because they are inspired by the passion and potential of those they mentor. Share where you are headed with your life and career, and why their experience/advice can help.

Consider asking the question – "Would you consider being my mentor?" – Some people shy away from the question and can leave the other person confused. If the person is a stranger, perhaps start with coffee instead of asking the question outright. People only become mentors when there is personal rapport and mutual respect. First ask to see if you can meet or call them once, and then see if you can build rapport with them. You want to inspire them to care about where you are headed. If there is chemistry, you can then ask about developing a continuing relationship.

- **Communicate what type of mentor relationship you are looking for** - This includes both the type of advice/feedback you are hoping to receive, and how often you hope to interact (once a quarter, every month, ad-hoc, etc...). Many people are happy to be mentors, but are also very busy people. Clearly articulating what kind of relationship you want to build with them will help them decide if they want to take this on.
- **Listen and adapt to their response** – Very likely this person will be happy to be your mentor, but may counter about the frequency of communication. Just go with it.
- **Follow up** – It's up to you to make it easy for your mentor to help you. If this person agrees to be your mentor, he or she would still expect you to take the lead, figure out how best to communicate, and proactively build the relationship over time.

Don't...

- **Expect a yes response, and don't take it personally.** You have given it your best shot. If the person cannot fit it in their schedule, then it won't work anyway. Just think of it as practice until you find the right fit.
- **Assume what's convenient for them.** Everyone works and interacts differently. Ask them what's the best way to keep in touch, approach them when you need advice, and then follow what they say.
- **Wait too long before asking.** Timing will help your cause. If you just recently worked with them, and you want them to be your mentor, then ask them soon. This way, they still have a strong impression of who you are.

Adapted from: <https://bemycareercoach.com/soft-skills/self-promotion/mentor-how-to-ask.html>; created on October 15, 2015