

Being a mentee

Mentoring is a partnership.

Developing your mentoring partnership takes time and effort to develop. And it's worth the investment.

Your first meeting

Let's assume you've already discussed expectations with your mentor. Here are some other early discussion topics:

- things you have in common
- your mentor's career path and specific skills and experiences that he / she found useful along the way
- your career experiences
- your current goals
- your career interests and preferences / aspirations

Specific questions for your mentor

- What is a typical day like for you?
- Who has influenced you in your career?
- What's next for you? What are your goals?
- What's the best advice you've ever been given?
- If you could go back in your career, what might you do differently?
- What one decision had the biggest impact on your career path?
- What do you like most about your work? Least?
- What did you learn the hard way?
- Who should I meet and why?
- What was your experience with past mentorships?
- What gaps do you see in my background?
- What types of projects/opportunities should I seek out (stretch projects)?

Future discussion topics

- Any new developments since your last meeting
- Potential next steps in your career
- Building / enhancing your network
- Parts of the organization you want to learn more about
- Any interpersonal challenges
- Balancing work and personal life
- Things you can do to help your mentor
- Ways to find training / development opportunities
- Reflecting on a specific situation and how you might have approached it differently
- Leadership challenges (or other challenges) you are facing

Connecting and building trust

For the relationship to be successful, it's critical that you and your mentor connect and that you trust each other. Some advice to help foster a positive relationship:

- be yourself (be authentic)
- share personal challenges
- be straightforward and honest
- respect confidentiality
- be respectful of differences

What if it's not working? Not everyone will form a natural connection. If the relationship isn't working, it's important to communicate that clearly and respectfully, and work together to improve it (even if that means finding a different mentor).

Your role as mentee implies:

- Development Owner: Sound preparation for session, maintain a personal log of experiences, follow up on agreed actions.
- Initiator of Concerns: Be honest and transparent, share experiences openly.
- Progress Reviewer: Be open to hear another perspective; seek, listen and respond to feedback.

Some things to remember:

- As a mentee, you drive the relationship.
- Be active in your development. Your mentor can help you move forward, but you own your career.
- Be willing to discuss issues openly and honestly.
- Mentoring is a two-way street -- find ways you can help your mentor.
- Don't take it personally if your mentor is too busy to meet
- Come to meetings prepared. Reflect on previous discussions and think of new topics.

Do's and Dont's for Mentees

Do...

- respect your mentor's time as much as your own
- be open to feedback and don't get defensive
- come up with a goal or plan for the meetings within the program
- develop a "contract" agreeing with your mentor on the logistics and topics that will be covered within the relationship
- come to each meeting with questions prepared
- keep the relationship on a professional and constructive basis
- follow-through on all commitments that have been discussed during the meetings
- be open / honest and discuss the most appropriate form of communication with your mentor.

Do not...

- expect decisions to be made for you
- exaggerate your accomplishments or relationships
- ignore advice, but understand that you do not have to act on all advice offered
- try to be the mentor
- break confidence with your mentor
- focus on personal matters
- solicit job offers
- come unprepared
- avoid discussion of inappropriate subjects and forcing your solutions in conflicts