

Best Practices for Mentees

You should drive the relationship. The mentee should take responsibility for being the main driver of the relationship. Reach out to your mentor regularly to schedule meetings or phone calls and follow up within 24 hours of their responses to you. Consider setting an agenda for your meetings to stay on track and get all of your questions answered. Always ask at the end of each meeting “when should we meet next?” so that you can get a date on the calendar after comparing both of your schedules.

The relationship should be mutually beneficial. Mentors want you to ask insightful, thoughtful questions that you cannot find the answers to online or through someone else (everyone loves a resourceful person!). Send your mentor interesting articles, podcasts or books you come across that you think he or she may find interesting. When you find someone in your network with whom you think your mentor may want to be connected, offer to make the connection for your mentor. Be sure that you are keeping both your goals and your mentor’s in mind during each meeting. Working toward and achieving those goals is critical to the success of the mentorship relationship.

Be gracious. Thank your mentor often for their time. The best way to show how thankful you are for your mentor’s time is to respect it. Arrive on time for all meetings and keep your interactions/emails concise. When meeting in person, ask where is most convenient for your mentor to travel; consider meeting at their office or near their home. Be sure to send regular follow up thank you emails or send a thoughtful note after a particularly meaningful interaction or discussion.

Circle back and follow up. As with any business connection, always follow up. For example, let your mentor know what resulted from your conversation/how their advice worked out, or thank them for putting you in touch with someone who told you about a job opening, etc. This is an important touch point to thank the person and show what they did had an important impact on you. This is a key behavior to building a solid, sustainable network. If you know you are going to have a hard time remembering to do this, put a note in your calendar.

Avoid being negative. Your time with your mentor should be spent sharing problems and looking for solutions or getting their advice and feedback on a certain issue you are tackling. Your mentor’s time is precious and should not be spent airing grievances or gossip. Try to stay positive and professional when discussing a difficult co-worker or situation.

Avoid impersonal, transactional exchanges. Remember that your mentor genuinely enjoys connecting with you (that’s why they volunteered their time to work with you!) so ask their advice, listen to their stories, and be authentic.

For your first conversation: It is important to make a good first impression at your initial meeting. Follow these tips to feel prepared and confident!

- **Do your homework.** Look at your mentor’s LinkedIn profile, company website, and their bio listed in the Mentorship Program platform. Get a feel for their career path and background.
- **Reflect on your expectations and goals.** What do you want to get out of this first meeting? What are your larger goals for what you want to get out of this relationship? What do you need and expect out of your mentor? Arriving to the meeting having reflected privately about these topics

will help you be prepared for the larger conversation you will be having as a pair about the relationship's expectations and parameters.

- **Come with questions.** Write out a list of questions you would like to ask. More than likely the conversation will be quite informal and flow naturally, but having those questions listed will help you stay on track and will guide you in your discussion if necessary.
- **Express your intentions.** Open your conversation with your mentor with “today I’d like to accomplish...” and list 2-3 items you want to be sure to cover. This is a good way to start every meeting with your mentor. It will keep you on track and anchor you to your goals.
- **Have a good time.** Relax and enjoy yourself. Your mentor has volunteered their time because they want to get to know you and help you.

Pay it forward. Consider signing up to be a mentor (alumni only). Anyone, at any age or life stage, can be a mentor. Remember, you can be both a mentor and a mentee at the same time!

Source

https://mentor.northwestern.edu/programs/nnmp/Best_Practices_Mentees