How to Be a Good Mentee: 7 General Guidelines

Understand What You’re Looking For: Before you approach a prospective mentor, be prepared to answer why you’re interested in learning from this particular person. What type of guidance are you hoping to receive? Make sure your expectations are reasonable, as many would-be mentors will be scared off if they think they’ll have to meet you every week for a year or act as a referee between you and your boss.

Lay out a Vision for the Relationship: Once your mentor agrees to engage, open your first meeting with a tentative schedule for when and where you’re going to get together, and what you’re going to discuss. Read the person’s reaction. Hopefully, they will be enthusiastic and you can finalize a plan. But if they aren’t, now is the time to find out. You don’t want a mentor who is meeting you out of obligation.

Respect Your Mentor’s Time: Your mentor likely has a busy life outside of their relationship with you, so don’t make time-consuming requests or call them at all hours for advice. Stick to the designated meeting schedule and do everything in your power to ensure that get-togethers start and end on time.

Prepare Questions in Advance –and Listen to the Answers: Before each meeting, put some thought into what you’d like to learn from your mentor. Brainstorm at least 5 questions, and while asking them, show that you’re listening by nodding, ignoring interruptions like your beeping phone, jotting down notes, and asking relevant follow-ups.

Tell the Truth: It may take a few conversations to trust your mentor, but once you do, don’t hold back important pieces of information. If your mentor doesn’t have the full story, their advice won’t be as helpful. Also, don’t be afraid to admit mistakes and failures. Your mentor is there to guide you through them.

Be Open to Change: Many people don’t like receiving criticism in any form, but recognize that your mentor just wants to help you improve. When you receive feedback, don’t get immediately defensive. Instead, ask yourself honestly if your mentor has a valid point. If they do, solicit their input on making a course-correction.

Look for Ways to Help in Return: Show your mentor the appreciation they deserve for giving you the benefit of their experience. Follow up on your commitments to them, and consider what you can do to make their life easier. Perhaps, for example, you can assist with some research for an upcoming presentation, or you can make a networking introduction.

These guidelines were developed by Alexandra Levit, business and workplace author, speaker, and consultant. She can be found at www.alexandralevit.com

Sample Message to a Potential Mentor

[Mentor’s Username],

Introduce yourself: My name is [First Name] and I’m a [first-year, second-year, third-year, fourth-year, or graduate student] studying [major] at UTA. In addition to my studies, I currently participate in [co-curriculars] and I have previously worked as [internship experience/work experience].

Address why you think this mentor would be a good fit for you: It was great to see your profile listed in the UTA CampusTap Maverick Network platform. I’d like the opportunity to hear about your experiences in a career [in field/at company/as a job title]. I’m interested in becoming a [job title], and I thought your background puts you in an excellent position to advise me.

Add, if applicable, something that stuck out to you about this mentor’s profile: I noticed that you mentioned in your profile that you [really enjoy working with students]... You mentioned in your profile that you have some expertise in [something specific you’d like to learn about], which caught my eye because I’m interested in learning more about that... Your profile caught my attention because [you seem enthusiastic about mentoring students and I’m excited to work with someone so passionate].

Address what you want to get out of the mentorship relationship: I’m looking for a mentor because [I’m about to graduate and I’ve recently started job searching]. I’d appreciate your tips about networking, interviewing, and salary negotiation. I’d also like to learn more about the [industry name] industry and your experiences in your career so far.

Address how you’d like to interact and how much time and attention you think you’ll need: While I’d prefer to meet in person for about an hour once a month if possible, I understand you have a busy schedule. If we need to meet via Skype or phone, that will work for me as well. [Include time of day] tend to work best for my schedule. My hope is that I can find a mentor with whom to work for 3-4 months. Of course, if we achieve our goals sooner or we’re really enjoying our time together, we can discuss concluding our relationship earlier or extending it to longer than four months.

Conclude with a thank you: Thank you for considering me as a mentee. I hope we’ll get the chance to connect.

Sincerely,

[Your First Name or Username]

Sample Agenda for Initial Meeting

1. Introductions: Get to know one another
   a. Share your personal and professional history
   b. Swap stories about your UTA experience. Identifying points of connection will begin to establish a shared rapport
   c. Use the Ice Breaker Exercise in your Mentee Packet. This is a set of questions that you can use to guide a conversation with your mentor to get to know one another better.

2. Discuss your expectations for your mentorship relationship
   a. What do we each want to get out of this partnership?
   b. What does mentoring look like to you? How do you envision this relationship playing out?
   c. Use the Setting the Tone for Our Mentorship Partnership sheet to help guide this conversation with your mentor
   d. Fill out the Mentorship Agreement Form together. This doesn't need to be signed or turned in, it is simply an exercise to ensure that both parties have clearly defined, shared expectations and goals.

3. Set your goals for your mentorship relationship
   a. Articulating clear goals is critical to the success of your partnership. Take this time during your first meeting to brainstorm your goals.
   b. Be sure you understand what a SMART Goal is and double check that your goals are clearly expressed and attainable.
   c. Once you and your mentor have written your goals, add them to your Mentorship Agreement Form, mentioned above.

4. Schedule your next meeting
   a. Be sure that you’v exchanged relevant contact information like email address, phone number, or Skype username.
   b. Get excited! You and your mentor are off to a great start.

Don’t Forget! Follow-up with your mentor within two days of your first meeting to thank them for their time and to confirm the date of your next meeting.

Setting the Tone for Our Mentorship Partnership

Essential Questions

Below are essential questions to ask before embarking on your mentorship relationship. Be sure to both ask and answer each question and use these questions to guide a thoughtful conversation about what you want and need out of this partnership. This conversation should end by completing the Mentorship Agreement Form and setting SMART Goals for the mentorship partnership.

1. Have you had a mentor before? What have your mentorship experiences been like?

2. What are your short-term and long-term career visions?

3. What broad learning goals do you have and why are those goals important to you?

4. What is it you need, want, and expect out of this mentorship relationship?

5. Tell me about your personal communication style and preferred communication style.

6. How would you prefer that I contact you?

7. How often should we meet?

8. How should we meet? In person? Skype?

9. How long should each meeting be, generally?

10. How long should we work together as a mentorship pair? Three months? Six months?

Mentorship Agreement
This agreement does not need to be signed by both parties, but rather is a list of talking points. This document is meant to be an exercise to ensure that both the mentor and mentee have clearly defined expectations and goals.

**Define Expectations: How will interactions be executed?**
1) Meetings – we will meet:
   - [ ] In person
   - [ ] Skype or another web-cam platform (If other, list here: ____________)
   - [ ] Phone
   - [ ] Email

2) How often would we like to meet/interact (e.g. once a week/every other week/once a month)?

3) How long will a typical meeting or phone call last (e.g. half an hour, one hour)?

4) If an email or voicemail is received, we agree to get back to the other person within:
   - [ ] 24 Hours
   - [ ] 1 - 2 days
   - [ ] 3 - 4 days
   - [ ] Other: ______________

5) What is the agreed upon duration of this relationship?
The Lockheed Martin Career Development Center suggests that relationships remain active for at least 3 months, a typical duration is 3 - 6 months.

6) If we need to cancel a meeting or phone call, how will that be communicated?

7) When will we meet next?

**Define Goals:**
Setting clear SMART goals (1 - 3) is critical to the success of a mentorship relationship. Be sure to spend time reflecting and discussing these goals together. Refer to What Is a SMART Goal?, the Goal-Setting Worksheet, and the Essential Questions to Ask worksheet to facilitate the goal-setting process (email careers@uta.edu if you need an extra copy).

1) What are the mentee’s goals for this mentorship relationship?
   - GOAL 1:
   - GOAL 2:
   - GOAL 3:

2) What are the mentor’s goals for this mentorship relationship?
   - GOAL 1:
   - GOAL 2:
   - GOAL 3:

Meeting Management: How to Make the Most of Your First and Last Five Minutes

Meeting Kick Off

a. Chit chat/rapport building: Personal and/or business (if appropriate)
b. Show appreciation for meeting: Example – “Thanks for taking the time to meet with me.”
c. Confirm length of meeting: Example – “You mentioned you have about 30 minutes...is that still the case?”

Set Expectations for the Meeting

a. Briefly state the goals and/or objections for the meeting: Example – “I was hoping that we could learn a bit more about each other’s career paths and determine...”
b. Present an agenda: Example – “To help us meet these goals, I thought the following agenda might help us...”
c. Check in to see if your mentor has other topics they’d like to cover: Example – “What else would you like to cover to make this a good use of your time?”

Concluding the Meeting

a. The last five minutes can be as important as the first five minutes. Be sure to summarize the important outcomes and learnings from your meeting: Example – “What you said about making a conscious next step in my career really resonated with me...”
b. Confirm next steps: Example – “when should we meet next?” so that you can get a date on the calendar after comparing both of your schedules.
c. Be gracious. Thank your mentor for their time.

Follow Up

a. As with any business connection, always follow up. For example, let your mentor know what resulted from your conversation or how their advice worked out. If you know you are going to have a hard time remembering to do this, put a note in your calendar.

These guidelines were developed by Dave Ryan, ’84 Managing Partner at Gray Matters Group. He can be found at www.graymattersgroup.com.

Icebreak Exercise: Questions to Ask Your Mentor at Your First Meeting

When you begin your relationship with your mentor, you may wonder what you should discuss. Hopefully you will be pleasantly surprised about how easily conversation flows with your mentor. One way to prepare for this meeting is to think of some icebreaker questions. We encourage you to consider the following list or write your own questions! Note that if you ask these questions you should be prepared to answer them too – this is a great way for you to get to know your mentor and for your mentor to get to know you!

1. Why did you choose UTA?
2. Tell me about your UTA experience.
3. Did you join any activities or clubs?
4. Where did you live freshman year? Where else did you live on or off campus?
5. Where did you grow up? What is your family like?
6. What is the most important thing you did this year?
7. What are five words a friend would use to describe you?
8. What is a motto you try to live by?
9. What is the greatest challenge you are facing right now professionally?
10. What do you value in a co-worker? Do you value similar or different traits in a manager?
11. Where do you see yourself in five years?
12. What is one goal you have for the next year?
13. What do you want to learn to do better?
14. What do you value most in life?

Questions to Ask Your Mentor

To Explore Career Fit

- How did you decide on this career?
- How does this career fit your interests, values, and skills?
- What are your main duties?
- What skills are most important for success?
- What kind of person does well in this industry/company?
- What was your major and how have you used this in your position(s)?
- What type of experience/coursework would you recommend [your major] students take to prepare for this type of career?
- What skills do you use most in your position?
- What is a ‘typical’ background for someone in your role?
- What opportunities are there for advancement in this field?
- What is a typical day like for you in your position?
- What are your favorite/least favorite parts of your job?

How to Prepare for a Career in a Specific Industry

- How did your time at UTA (inside and outside the classroom) prepare you for this field?
- What are some challenges to working in this industry?
- What experiences should I engage in to be better prepared for this industry?
- How is this field/industry changing?
- What type of internships are helpful to have to learn more about working in [job field]?
- Do you need an advanced degree to begin working or are there entry level jobs?
- What are some typical entry level jobs students start with?
- How do you work your way up in this industry?
- What trends do you see occurring in this industry?
- What are some of the internship and job search strategies you recommend?

Developed by Jeff Jenkins, NCA
Learning about the Specific Organization

- How would you characterize the work culture/environment in this setting?
- Can you share with me the structure of the department or division and how it fits into the total organization?
- Considering the people in your department or company, what are characteristics you believe makes them successful?
- Do you provide any sort of professional development or training programs?
- It seems that every organization has its own personality. How would you characterize yours?
- What do you like most/least about working for this company?

To Learn Internship/Job Search Strategy

- What are methods and resources for getting internships/jobs in this industry/company?
- What resources would you recommend I use to find an internship/job in this industry?
- Who else would you recommend I talk with about employment in this industry/company?

What Is a SMART Goal?

SMART Goals are:

**Specific:** The goal should be concrete and action-oriented. What, specifically, are you trying to achieve? When writing a goal, ask yourself: what do I mean by this? Is there another way to write this goal to make it more understandable or obvious for what I mean? Does the goal start with an action verb (for example: improve, create, and develop)?

**Measurable:** How will you know when you have accomplished the goal? How will you track and measure progress? How do you define success? Be sure to include this with your goal.

**Achievable:** The goal should require work, but be attainable. Is the goal too big? For example, “become CEO of my company” is probably too big of a goal for a one-year mentorship program. Or perhaps the goal is too easily achieved?

Do not set your sights too low! Make sure that the time-frame you set is realistic. Do you have the ability and commitment to reach the goal? What additional resources, time, money, or capability, will be needed for you to reach the goal? Does the goal set you up for failure?

**Relevant:** Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Is this goal in line with your long-term objectives?

**Timely:** Set a time limit; there should be a specific time-frame for accomplishing the goal which will keep you accountable.

Let’s look at an example: Be more involved this year with the UTA Alumni Office.

- **Is it specific?** Not really. What is meant by “more involved”? And, “be” is not an action verb. Get more specific—what exactly is it that you are trying to achieve?
- **Is it measurable?** No, not as it is written. How will you know when you have achieved that goal? How will you measure your success?
- **Is it achievable?** Potentially, but without specifics, it is hard to determine.
- **Is it relevant?** Potentially, but again, without more specifics it is difficult to determine.
- **Is it timely?** Yes. It is focused on this year.

A better goal would be: Develop a personal and professional support network by attending six UTA Alumni events this year.


The Closure Conversation: Discussion Guide

1. Did we achieve our learning goals?
   a. If yes, what did we learn as a result?
   b. If not, why?

2. What was successful about our mentorship relationship?

3. What was the most valuable thing we both learned through this process?

4. What specific insight, approach, or perspective did we both gain?

5. What has surprised us about this process?

6. How will we apply what we have learned?

7. What else did we need or want to learn?

8. What did you learn about yourself as a person?

9. What did you learn about mentorship? About being a mentee? A mentor?

10. What words of wisdom did your mentor or mentee share during this process have stuck with you?

11. In what ways have you grown and developed as a mentor?

12. What are you going to do differently or make an effort to try to do in your next mentorship relationship?

13. Do we want to continue to be in contact? If so, on what basis?

