

Getting Started

Let's look at how you can make the best use of the time spent during your mentoring relationship, make a significant difference to the mentee's professional life and create an enriching experience for both of you. We'll start with an overview of activities to consider. Many more ideas are included in the rest of this section.

This section offers tips and ideas on how to establish the building blocks of an effective mentoring relationship. It covers the following:

1. Your first meeting
2. Building the relationship
3. Suggested mentoring activities
4. Your last meeting and beyond
5. Handling roadblocks

1.1 Your first meeting

Here are some tips for making the most of your first meeting as a mentoring pair.

Before the meeting

- The mentor can review the mentee's resume to gain a better understanding of the mentee's professional background and professional objectives.
- Review the online Handbook and The Mentoring Partnership website.
- The mentor and mentee can have a conversation, individually or together, with the coach to discuss the match and explore any ideas s/he may have.
- Review roles and expectations from the mentoring commitment.
- Read over the Partnership Agreement and Code of Conduct that you received at the orientation session or from the coach.

At the meeting

- Take time to get to know each other. Share professional and personal histories, find similarities and differences. Mentors can cover specific information on what they do at work and what their position means in the organization.
- Discuss logistics, such as
 - best time of day or week to get in touch. A recurring meeting time often works best.
 - a convenient place to meet
 - how long to wait if someone doesn't show up for a scheduled meeting.
 - best method for keeping in touch between meetings
 - what's expected between calls or visits

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At the meeting (continued)

- Set boundaries for the mentoring relationship. Discuss and seek clarity about
 - whether it is okay to discuss emotional issues and how.
 - whether it is okay for the mentor to offer feedback on professional norms about clothing, grooming, nonverbal communication.
 - whether it is appropriate to address language issues.
 - whether it is appropriate to discuss behaviours that each of you may find offensive.
- Discuss confidentiality. Be very specific about things which you feel should stay confidential: please be mindful that the concept of confidentiality may vary significantly between cultures.
- Discuss challenges or barriers to meeting such as travel and child care.
- Decide what you want to achieve together and set priorities given the time frame and scope of your roles.
- Sign the Partnership Agreement.

At the end of the meeting

You should go away with

- the feeling that you know more about your mentee/mentor.
- an agreement on your learning goals and priorities.
- a few meetings booked in advance.
- an action plan for your first two or three meetings.
- a task, or tasks, for the mentee to work on between meetings.

1.2 Building the relationship

Role of the mentor

Mentors and mentees alike look forward to a productive and rewarding mentoring experience. Building an open and enjoyable relationship of mutual respect will be your key to achieving this goal. Your ability to create and maintain a relationship will be a significant part of your success.

Please remember that **the role of a mentor is not to find a job for the mentee.**

This expectation can put a strain on your mentoring relationship. Instead, maintain a focus on helping the mentee gain a better understanding and knowledge in the three key areas addressed by The Mentoring Partnership:

Workplace culture in the Canadian context

Information about the profession, industry, sector

Networking to build professional links

Successful mentoring is all about

- conversation
- sharing of knowledge, information and experiences
- earning from each other
- opening doors
- providing inspiration
- validating another's experience
- helping an experienced professional to transfer their knowledge and experience so that they can achieve success in a new situation

Building the relationship (continued)

Staying focused

It is inevitable that you will get side-tracked, distracted or slowed down by various developments during your time together.

Here are a few tips for what you can do at each meeting that may help you stay focused on your goal:

- Follow up on earlier commitments – what has been achieved, what challenges came up, how can they be addressed?
- Check on new developments in the mentee's life – do they present a new opportunity or a new challenge that needs to be addressed?
- Attend to anything that needs immediate attention, including a lack of motivation.
- Briefly go over your goals and milestones – are you still on target?
- Work on a topic or issue that you have selected for the day.
- Identify next steps, with deadlines and outcomes.

Always take some time for small talk and catching up with each other.

1.2.1 Tips

Consider the following points that may require special emphasis as you work to establish your mentoring relationship:

- Take time to get to know each other and to establish trust.
- Share your experience and background with each other, including obstacles you have overcome.
- Establish personal boundaries and respect them.
- Agree to ask each other lots of questions.
- Listen, listen, listen.

As a mentee, you will benefit from mentoring most if you

- have specific written goals.
- play a lead role in setting the agenda for each meeting with your mentor (1.b.2).
- come prepared
 - with the questions you think may be important to ask.
 - to talk about your professional background, career goals and aspirations, challenges and barriers to success.
- do your homework: follow up on research, conduct networking calls, revise your resume or anything else you and your mentor have agreed on in your meetings.
- openly discuss any challenges you are facing, be they career-specific or with the partnership.
- are accountable to your mentor, while assertively making choices that are best for you.
- open to adopting new strategies and ideas in your job search.
- do not expect all answers from your mentor, but accept their support in searching for answers.
- acknowledge that your state of mind will influence your progress. A positive state of mind will make it easier for your mentor to support you; a more negative state of mind may do otherwise.
- take responsibility for your emotions and attitudes.

Remember that your mentor is there to guide you in your job search process, not to find you a job.

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Building the relationship / Tips (continued)

As a mentor, you will mentor more effectively if you

- are aware that your communication style may be different from your mentee's.
- give your mentee the benefit of the doubt when differences arise during your mentoring relationship. Assume positive intentions and discuss what you are experiencing.
- make every effort to understand your mentee's challenges and issues. Always keep in mind that your mentee may have limited resources and may feel pressure and urgency to find a job due to their personal and/or economic situation.
- are honest about the limitations or difficulties which you see in your mentee.
- ask for permission to go beyond sharing of knowledge. Start by asking "Do you want my support with this?", "Shall we work together on this?" or "Do you want some feedback on this?"
- address areas of skill enhancement.
- reinforce your mentee's strengths.
- discuss when you or your mentee may need to consult the coach or other resources for assistance; seek help and advice when you need it.
- keep culture shock in mind – adjusting to a new environment takes time and can be emotionally challenging.
- remember that reactions are based on 20% of what is currently happening and 80% on the past, including the circumstances of your mentee's education, professional experience.

1.3 Suggested mentoring activities

Planning your time together

Consider using the Initial Assessment tool to identify areas that the mentee may need to focus on. Start by understanding the mentee's priorities.

Knowing the mentee's professional aspirations and job search gaps will give you both a good sense of what to do next. If the mentee has needs that fall beyond the scope of your mentoring relationship, then contact the coach for referrals.

Once you have identified the mentee's needs and together have set the priorities, it is time to develop an action plan. You may follow these four simple steps:

1. Confirm the purpose of your work together.
2. Make sure you are clear on your goals for the mentoring relationship. Try to have goals in each of the areas addressed by mentoring: workplace culture, professional information and networking.
3. Agree on a few milestones.
4. Start by planning next steps in advance – i.e. what are you going to talk about at your next two or three meetings? At the end of each meeting, reassess your goals and milestones and modify as necessary.

Some mentoring pairs benefit from structure and others are comfortable with a less formal plan. Use the Sample Action Plan Template as a starting point if you both decide that a chart would be helpful to record your thoughts and keep you on track. You can download it and complete it together.

Remember that you do not have to do it all!

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Planning your time together (continued)

Different priorities may require different strategies and approaches. You can do the following:

1. Work together in your meetings to address the priorities which are highly relevant to the mentee's goal, for which the mentee has sufficient skills and knowledge to build upon and for which the mentor has the resources to be helpful.
2. Seek referrals to other programs or services when the mentee's needs are highly relevant and the mentee is prepared to address them, but the mentor can only provide limited support.

Consult the coach for suggestions. The mentor may also make referrals within his or her networks.

3. Redirect the mentee to training options for areas where the gaps in skills and knowledge are significant.
4. Postpone discussing priorities that are not highly relevant to the mentee's goals.

1.3 Suggested mentoring activities

Quick guide to mentoring activities

Previous mentors and mentees have found the following activities most useful. Take a look at this quick guide for ideas. You may also consult a [sample agenda](#)

Together you can

- share information about your work culture and your current or former workplace. Talk about how work culture varies from one place to another and from one country to another.
- ensure that cover letters and resumes meet industry standards.
- role-play both information interviews and actual job interviews.
- practise telephone screening interviews by reviewing typical interview questions. Talk about how telephone interviews tend to be structured and how best to prepare for it including how to leave an effective voicemail.
- discuss "what if" scenarios of challenges people may face in the workplace and develop solutions.
- find opportunities for job shadowing, volunteering and professional consultancy.

Mentors can

- invite mentees to meetings, briefings or training sessions at your workplace to observe how your organization functions and as an opportunity to learn about Canadian workplace culture, if this is appropriate in the mentor's workplace.
- invite mentees to industry events or lectures and discuss the topics presented.
- help mentees build an effective network: introduce them to your industry contacts; invite them to lunch with colleagues; help them to set up information interviews with your colleagues.

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Quick guide to mentoring activities (continued)

Mentors can

- review the mentee’s job search activities and set weekly targets.
- find a way for mentees to showcase their work; for example, invite them to speak at a “lunch and learn” session in your department to share insights about workplace culture and the way in which business operates in other countries.

There are many activities that may contribute to a successful mentoring relationship. It will be up to both of you to determine the best path to follow. To start off, here are a few ways in which the mentor might support the mentee:

- setting goals
- developing an action plan
- problem-solving
- following through with a plan or commitment

Take the time to identify

- top priorities
- whether additional training is required
- challenges and barriers

Once you have assessed job search areas to focus on, revisit the mentee’s goals.

- Is the goal realistic?
- Is it achievable in the given time frame?
- Is it necessary to identify more manageable interim goals instead?
- Does the mentor have the resources to help address these gaps?

1.4 Your last meeting and beyond

Closures are important moments in our lives: take the time to acknowledge and celebrate your journey together.

- Review your work of the last few months: What was your most memorable experience and why? What have each of you learned?
- Talk a bit about the future: What will the mentee’s next steps be? Any parting words of advice from the mentor?
- Thank each other and acknowledge your partner’s contribution.

Your last meeting may take different forms; for example, your mentoring relationship may not last the full four months because the mentee may have already found a job. In this case, it is important to at least follow up with a phone call to signal the end of your formal relationship.

Your last meeting is not the end of your involvement in the program.

- Make sure to complete the evaluation form that will be sent to you electronically.
- Mentees have the option to stay in touch with the coach and get further support in their job search.
- Mentors have the option to stay involved and volunteer to be matched again.

Whether you will stay in touch with each other is up to you. You may want to maintain your relationship; however, remember that there is no ongoing obligation to offer or receive support after your formal mentoring relationship is over.