

Tips for Mentees



Guidelines for Interacting with Your Mentor

- **Maintain professionalism** - Remember to keep your communication on a professional level.
- **Respect their time** - Mentors have careers, families, projects and their own deadlines and responsibilities. Monitor the time and the amount of contact you have with them and show appreciation whenever you can.
- **Know what you want** - Before a meeting, plan what you hope to achieve through the exchange.
- **Respect boundaries** - Ask for advice rather than job opportunities.
- **Reciprocate effort** - Mentoring is a two-way street; make sure to interact with your mentor at times other than when you need something (maintain the relationship).
- **Follow up** - Reiterate interest, keep top of mind.
- **Show appreciation** – Always say thanks (or write a thank you!) for help and favors you receive.

Non-verbals

Much of how and what we communicate is done through non-verbal communication. According to some studies, as much as 90% of our communication is done through body language. You need to be aware of the messages you are conveying both verbally and non-verbally. It is important that you create a positive impression non-verbally.

- **Make sure you have a firm handshake** (no limp wrist handshakes) and look your mentor in the eye. Maintaining good eye contact shows that you are present and engaged in the conversation.
- **Your body language should convey a sense of positive energy and engagement.** Sit up or stand straight with legs crossed or feet firmly on the floor. Your back should be straight, head up and looking forward. Refrain from slouching, appearing too relaxed, or excessive fidgeting.
- **Smile!** There is no overstating the positive impact a simple smile can have during a conversation. While you want to come across as serious and professional, you also want to remain friendly and likeable. Don't be afraid to show your interpersonal skills and natural warmth during the exchange.
- **Practice controlling nervous ticks** (twirling hair, tapping foot) and "talking" hands to ensure they enhance your image and don't detract from it. Also keep in mind that chewing gum is never appropriate in a professional setting.

Introductions

- If a mentor mispronounces your name, politely and clearly say, "I'm sorry, my name is". Smile and don't make a big deal of the mistake.
- With introductions, always err on the conservative side and use Mr., Ms., Doctor or Professor until the person you are introducing tells you to do otherwise. Don't be too casual; always maintain a level of respect. If you have any doubt on this issue, use the more formal approach.
- When shaking hands, you may extend your hand as soon as eye contact is made and the introduction begins.
- If you draw a blank on someone's name, take the embarrassment on yourself by saying, "I'm sorry, I know we've met, your name is...?".

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR MENTEES

1. What made you become a mentor?
2. Tell me in two paragraphs about yourself.
3. What do you do on your job?
4. Tell me an embarrassing thing that happened to you lately.
5. What is your favorite sport and why?
6. How did you meet your spouse or girl/boy friend?
7. What do you say to your kids when they are in trouble?
8. Did you see the game last night?
9. What is your favorite book and why?
10. How were you in school . . .really?
11. Let's talk music. I listen to. . . .
12. Can you help me with. . . .
13. Where did you go for summer vacation? Was it fun?
14. Did you ever attend summer school?
15. How do you feel about sport stars as role models?
16. What college did you attend and why? Can I attend the same college?
17. If you could be anyone in the world for an hour, who would it be and why?
18. Let's tell jokes or funny stories. . . .
19. Who was your mentor growing up and why?
20. What do you do for fun?
21. What is the latest movie you have seen?
22. Kids make fun of me. Did they make fun of you when you were young?
23. How do you feel about trade school, vocational school, or the Army instead of college?
24. Are you staying home for Thanksgiving?
25. What are some good summer jobs for kids?