

How to Be an Excellent Mentee¹

Fontaine Center

The following tips will help you foster a meaningful and worthwhile relationships with a mentor.

- **Be Proactive:** Take initiative for seeking your mentor out, arranging appointments, and communicating requests for time and assistance.
 - *It is your responsibility to schedule meetings! Don't wait for mentor to email you*
 - *Ask for help and feedback with all your assignments*
- **Keep commitments (and deadlines):** Demonstrate that you are self-motivated, self-monitoring, and reliable when it comes to delivering work promised at the time you promised it. Few things will impress a mentor more than reliability.
 - *Always let your mentor know if you cannot make a scheduled meeting*
 - *Show up early, not late*
 - *There may be consequences for repeated no-shows and tardiness*
- **Always strive for excellence:** Excellent students set themselves apart by refusing to settle for mediocrity – particularly in work produced for the mentor.
 - *Do not just go through the motions*
 - *The more you put into the program, the more you will get out of it*
- **Demonstrate openness to feedback:** Accept praise and criticism with openness and non-defensiveness.
- **Demonstrate responsiveness to coaching:** When your mentor takes the time to offer advice, follow up later with evidence that you have put it into practice (or at least considered it thoughtfully).
- **Communicate honestly and directly:** Be forthright, clear, and tactful in letting your mentor know how you feel and how they can help.
 - *Think of what you would like from your mentor rather than waiting for him/her to ask*
- **Accept increasing responsibility and autonomy:** As you progress in the program, accept larger tasks with greater independence; your job is to move from novice to junior collaborator with your mentor.
 - *Keep in mind: you need your mentor the most when you are the busiest and most stressed*
- **Accept imperfection and admit mistakes:** Although quality effort is required, perfection is impossible; avoid getting mired in fruitless demands for perfect performance and be quick to admit mistakes when you make them.
- **Be mindful of your mentor's goals:** Remember that mentorship is a two-way street and that your mentor's time is precious. In addition to identifying your goals, consider your mentor's goals for the relationship and remain mindful of your role in helping the mentor achieve those goals.
- **Keep your expectations reasonable:** Avoid falling prey to unrealistic expectations of your mentor; your mentor cannot meet all your needs, know everything, or always offer undivided attention.
- **Maintain a sense of humor:** Humor is an excellent antidote for anxiety, frustration, and catastrophic thinking; most mentors appreciate a student who can keep things in perspective when times get tough.
- **Build a mentoring constellation:** Rather than expect your mentor to be all things, seek out a range of personal and professional support during your program including peers, more advanced students, and other faculty/staff inside or outside the institution.

1. Quoted, with changes, from Johnson, W.B. (2007). On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, N.J., p93-94