

Reasonable Expectations for Mentors and Mentees

Mentors and mentees typically enter their relationships with assumed expectations of each other. Many have been irritated and disappointed because expectations weren't met or even discussed. To prevent this and help you with your planning, the table below lists some common, reasonable expectations. In many cases, the expectations are similar or the same. A mentoring relationship is a partnership, with both people showing respect and support for each other.

Discuss these expectations early in your mentoring partnership. You may want to add other expectations the two of you identify.

Mentors	Mentees
Accept the relationship on a temporary basis, for approximately 12 months or until one or both of you decides to end it.	Accept the relationship on a temporary basis, for approximately 12 months or until one or both of you decides to end it.
Meet as often as your schedules permit (two hours per month recommended)	Meet as often as your schedules permit (two hours per month recommended)
Provide help, serve as a learning broker, and be a sounding board for issues relating to the mentee's career goals and development.	Take initiative to drive the relationship and be responsible for your own career development and planning.
Provide and be open to feedback. When providing feedback, be honest, yet tactful.	Provide feedback about the mentoring relationship and be open to receiving feedback. When providing feedback, be honest, yet tactful.
Provide suggestions and advice on goals activities, and progress.	Ask for suggestions and advice early in the relationship. When advice is given, listen to the mentor, apply at least some of their ideas, and let him or her know the results.

Mentors	Mentees
Keep any commitments made.	Keep any commitments made.
Keep confidences with mentee.	Keep confidences with mentor.
Work out any minor concerns about the relationship.	Work out any minor concerns about the relationship.
Evaluate the relationship at various points (at least mid-point and ending) within the agreed-upon time period.	Evaluate the relationship at various points (at least mid-point and ending) within the agreed-upon time period.

Unreasonable expectations regarding mentors

It's easy for a mentee to assume that the mentor will be more actively involved than the mentor is able. These unrealistic expectations can cause irritation and disappointment on both sides. As a general guideline, the mentor should **not** be expected to:

- ❖ Provide the mentee with personal introductions to other people unless they're comfortable doing so.
- ❖ Spend more time on the relationship than he or she is willing or able to give.
- ❖ Take the lead in the relationship, setting up all meetings and driving the mentee's career development.
- ❖ Continue the relationship beyond the agreed-upon time period.

Specific tips for mentees

These practical strategies can help mentees build a relationship with their mentors:

- ❖ Remember that you own your development, your mentor doesn't. It's up to you to identify objectives as well as keep the relationship focused and moving forward.
- ❖ Use active listening skills in discussions with your mentor.
- ❖ Be prepared to ask for specific advice on your skill set, ideas, plans, and goals. The more specific you are, the easier it will be for your mentor to respond.

- ✧ Be complete yet succinct in your comments and explanations.
- ✧ Make it easy for your mentor to give you honest, specific feedback. Ask for it early in your relationship.
- ✧ If you get some corrective feedback, don't defend yourself. Thank your mentor for being honest with you. Then ask, "What specifically don't you like about _____?"