

Top Tips for Mentors



1. Set expectations collaboratively

It's important to be on the same page as your mentee from the start. Setting goals and ground rules for interaction allows you both to feel confident in building the relationship. Some things to consider include: How will you communicate? How often? Are you available for impromptu phone calls or should everything be scheduled? What are the mentee's goals and in what ways can you realistically support them? Working through these questions from the start prevents misalignment and ensures you both find value in the relationship.

2. Share honest feedback

Feedback is a vital part of professional growth. Being able to deliver honest feedback in a respectful and thoughtful way is an important part of being a good mentor. In the Forbes article, "[If You Want To Be A Great Mentor Do These 5 Things](#)," Carrie Kerpen quotes Coral Chung, co-founder of luxury handbag brand Senreve as saying, "While it's wonderful to get support and be cheered on, it's also important to hear things that other people are not willing to say. In the early days of Senreve, some of my best mentors were also my harshest critics, but that was okay because it helped me improve, and it showed that they have high expectations from me."

3. Be a thoughtful listener

While your experience often means you know how to solve a problem, part of being a mentor is supporting your mentee in decision making—not making a decision for them. [The Ohio State University's Mentor Toolkit](#) lays out some strategies for effective listening, including: being aware of your own perspective and biases, ensuring

you are physically and mentally prepared to listen when working with your mentee, holding off on making judgments until hearing your mentee out and listening for main ideas, patterns and concepts—not just facts.

4. Provide another perspective

As [The Ohio State University's Mentor Toolkit](#) points out, "mentors have the luxury of being distant from their protégé's work problems and challenges." Mentors can help mentees take a step back and consider the bigger picture. They can teach mentees to coach themselves, asking questions that challenge their assumptions when addressing problems. Mentors can also provide a reflective perspective by asking questions like, "what was the most challenging aspect of the project for me?" and "what could I have done differently to reach my desired outcome?"

5. Encourage and motivate

At the end of the day, mentoring is about encouraging an aspiring leader to reach their full potential. Showing genuine interest in your mentee's goals and encouraging them to get out of their comfort zone to achieve them has intangible value. Remember, a little gesture goes a long way. Just sharing a book recommendation or sending a quick note on a big day goes a long way.