



NextLink Mentorship Guide

Tips, Tools & Best Practices

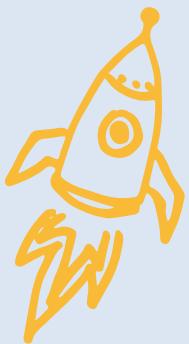




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NextLink Mentor Program

Our Mentor Program Team has put together this guide of tips, tools, and best practices to help our mentorships thrive. Through mentorship, Nexthinkers have the opportunity to learn from one another, reinforcing our culture of continuous growth. Mentors can develop leadership skills by guiding and supporting their mentees, while both mentors and mentees expand their networks and build meaningful connections across the organization. Together, we're creating a community rooted in learning, leadership, and collaboration.





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Mentee Section





Mentee: Is Mentoring Right for You?

Mentoring can be a great growth experience for your career, but timing plays a key role. Before committing to a mentoring partnership, we suggest you think about the following:

- Can you commit 1-2 hours bi-weekly or monthly for meetings and follow-ups?
- Do you have clear goals or are you willing to reflect on them?
- Are you motivated to invest in your personal growth?
- Can you engage in open, honest conversations?
- Are you willing to trust your mentor and be transparent?
- Can you accept and consider feedback, even when it challenges you?
- Are you open to new perspectives and stepping outside your comfort zone?
- Do you have realistic and adaptable expectations for mentoring?

If you answered yes, you're ready to take the next step!





Mentee: Expectations

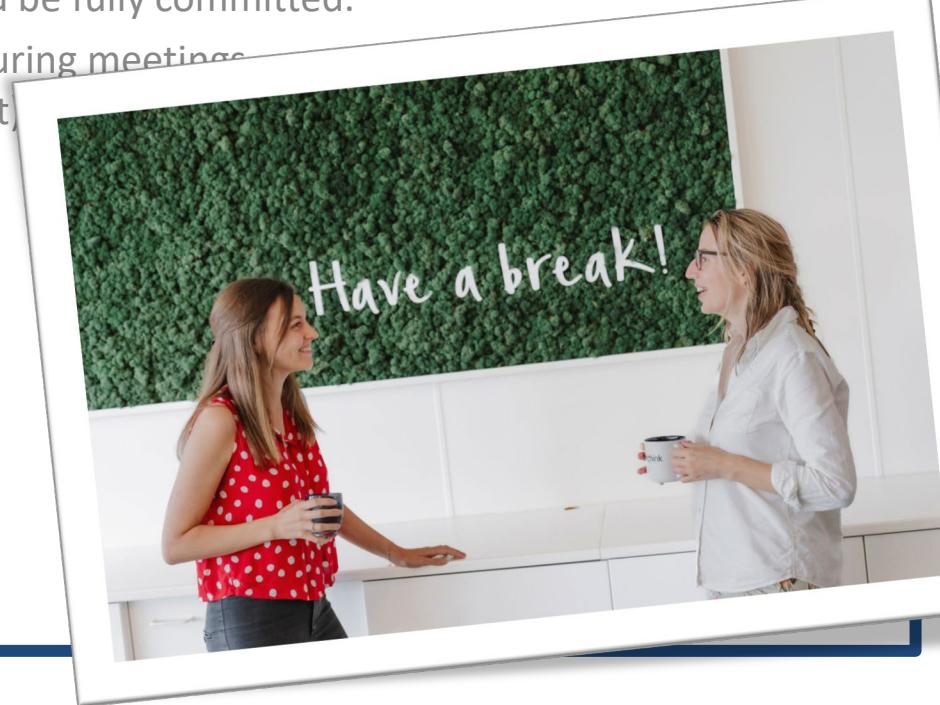


As the mentee, we expect you to be proactive in driving the relationship by:

- Setting up and confirm mentor meetings .
- Preparing meeting agenda.
- Keeping your mentor updated with your progress and how else they can help you.
- Driving your own self-development between meetings.
- Being open and honest with how you are tracking the success, how the relationship is going, and how the mentor can further help you get the most from the experience.

With your mentor:

- Review the mentorship agreement.
- Exchange Predictive Index profiles.
- Establish clear expectations and boundaries from the beginning - mutually decide on an agreed time and frequency of contact. *We recommend meeting/talking at least once a month, ideally bi-weekly.*
- Ensure your availability and be fully committed.
- Remove any distractions during meetings (phone and Teams on silent)





Mentee Tips: Preparing for your first meeting





First Mentoring Meeting



Quick Bio

- What is your background?
- How did you get to where you are today?
- What are some of the things you are most proud of?
- What are your biggest strengths and how have you managed to leverage these?

Growth Areas

- What skills did you highlight in your mentee application as areas for growth?
- What are some projects you're currently working on that highlight why you want to develop these skills.
- What would an ideal mentoring relationship look like?

Mentor's Digital Footprint

- Check out your mentor's LinkedIn profile. Do they also have Twitter, professional blog or website?



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Maximizing Your Mentoring Meetings

- Come prepared to **discuss progress, achievements, obstacles, and questions.**
- Set SMART goals and **action plans with your mentor.**
- **Identify skills and challenges** to work on together.
- **Seek** and consider your mentor's advice.
- **Respect** their experience while **filtering** advice for your situation.
- **Show humility** – mentors don't have all the answers and may refer you to others.
- **Be open** about successes and failures to help your mentor support you.
- **Follow through on commitments** and use strategies to stay accountable.





Get to
know your
mentor!

Conversation Starters



Ice Breakers

- *Tell me about yourself?*
- *Where are you from originally?*
- *What made you get into this type of work?*
- *If you could work from anywhere in the world, where would it be?*
- *What do you do for fun?*
- *What is the last book you read?*
- *What is your favorite movie?*

Mentoring Experience

- *Have you been a mentor or a mentee in the past? What was that experience like?*
- *What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?*
- *What are the defining factors in your personal development journey?*
- *What was a life-changing event/experience for you?*





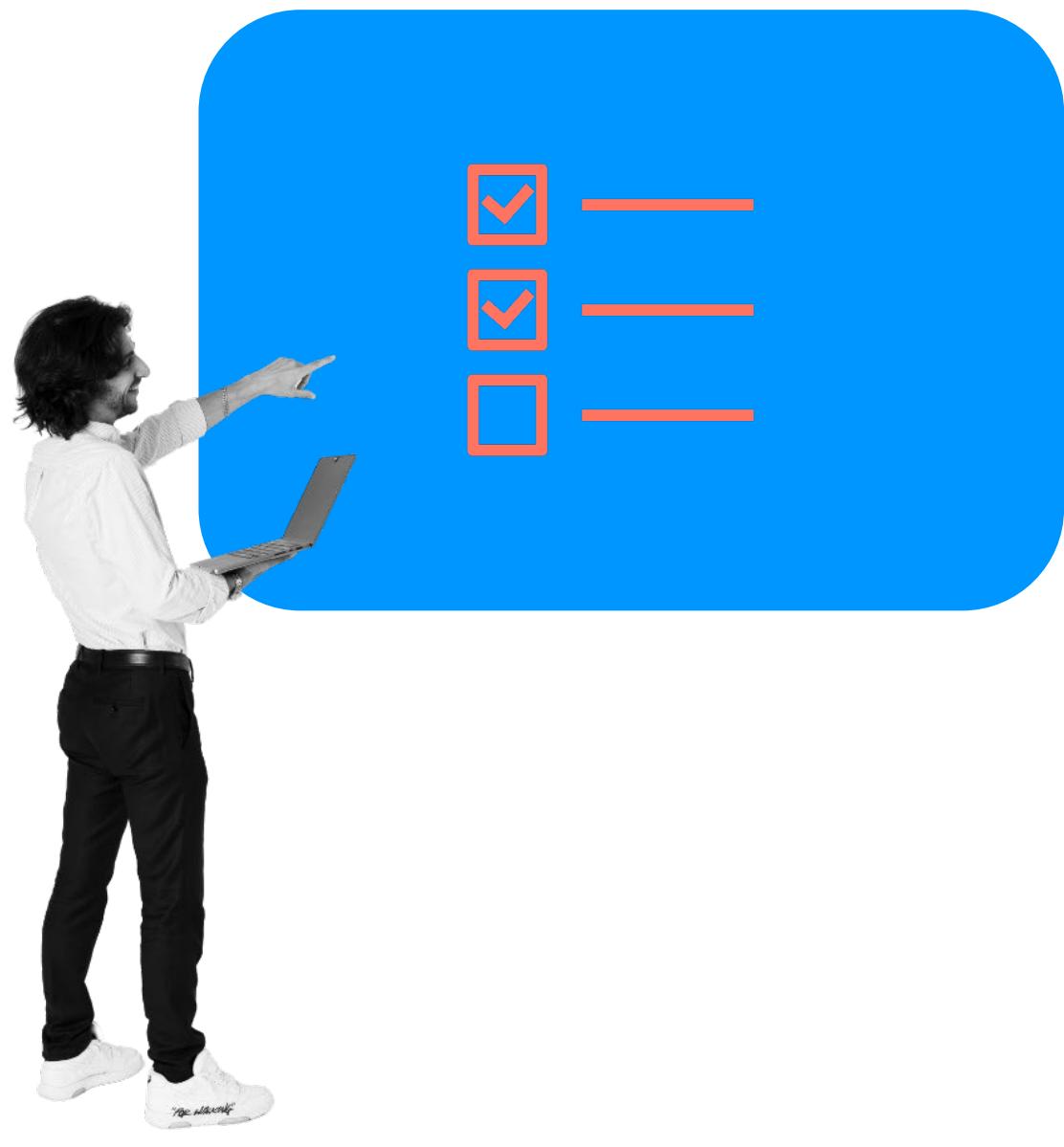
Mentee: Preparation Checklist



To help you prepare for your mentoring partnership, we've put together a simple checklist. Taking a few minutes to complete it before your first meeting can set you up for success and make the most of your time together.

Link to downloadable Checklist:

[NextLink Mentee Checklist](#)





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Mentor Section





Is Mentoring Right for You?

Mentoring can be a transformative experience for both personal and professional growth, but timing plays a key role. Before committing to a mentoring partnership, we recommend you think about:

Mentors:

Are you ready to be a mentor?

- Can you commit 1-2 hours bi-weekly?
- Will you invest in someone's growth while balancing your own?
- Can you guide without solving every problem?
- Are you open to listening, giving feedback, and sharing your experiences?
- Do you have the patience to support challenges and setbacks?
- Can you ask thoughtful questions and respect different perspectives?
- Are you committed to building a trusting, supportive relationship?

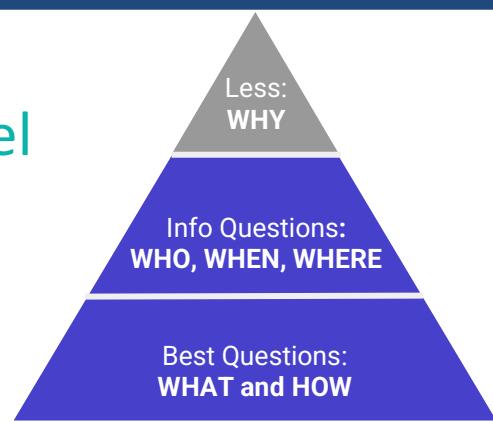
If you answered yes to these questions, you're ready to take on the meaningful role of a mentor!





Grow Coaching Model

1. Be fully **present** for and **focused** on the coachee
2. Be aware of your own **mindset** and that of the coachee
3. Practice **empathetic listening** (aka active or reflective listening)
4. Ask **open-ended questions** to facilitate coachee's own insight



Stage 1–GOAL	Stage 2–REALITY	Stage 3–OPTIONS	Stage 4–WILL
<p>Help coachee articulate a specific meaningful goal, including what success would look like.</p> <p>It's rare to uncover the most meaningful / impactful goal in the first telling. It is the coach's job to delve more deeply to clarify the goal further.</p>	<p>Help coachee articulate the "here and now" so s/he can map the journey to the goal.</p> <p>Watch for trying to gather too much data; as coach you only need to understand general dynamics, how coachee interprets the situation, and the impact on him/her.</p> <p>Provide objectivity and invite coachee to see the situation from different angles.</p>	<p>Help coachee brainstorm a list of potential actions to move toward goal. Go for <i>quantity</i> rather than <i>quality</i> of ideas; quality eval comes later.</p> <p>Encourage creativity and brainstorm ALL potential ways to achieve goal before deciding on actions.</p> <p>Offer your ideas <i>after</i> coachee exhausts his/hers. Attribute equal weight to all ideas.</p>	<p>Help coachee determine specific action plan s/he "owns" and follows to achieve the goal. This stage is about forward momentum and converting the discussion to a decision.</p> <p>Allow coachee to select relevant actions and decide how they want to be accountable.</p>
SAMPLE QUESTIONS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you want, desire, or need to overcome? • What are your interests, values and motivations? • What will success or achievement look or feel like? • When will you know you have succeeded? • How will you know you have succeeded? • How important is this to you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are you now with this topic? • What makes you think that? • What would your peers say about it? • What obstacles are currently in the way of your success? • What resources do you need to achieve your goal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your biggest obstacle wasn't there, what would you do? • If you had endless resources, what would you do? • What would your best friend, manager, or peer want or do in this situation? • What can you do right now to further develop skills that would be useful in reaching your goal? • What have helpful mentors done that has helped you progress? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will you do? • On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to doing this? (If 6 or below, ask what would bring them to an 8-10.) • What obstacles could arise? How will you overcome them? • When will you start? • How will you and I know it's been achieved or completed? • Who will you ask for feedback after you've taken action? • What advocacy would help? How can I provide more support towards your development?





Ways to grow a mentee



Experiences

- Take them to meetings or presentations.
- Introduce them to your network.
- Let them shadow you while you work.
- Serve on a committee together.
- Facilitate volunteer or leadership experiences.
- Encourage classes, research, or academic experiences.

Discussion Topics

- Interpersonal conflict that they have experienced or successfully avoided.
- A biggest fear.
- Miscommunication that they have experienced or successfully avoided.
- A quote that has meaning or inspiration.
- A role model that has been an influence.

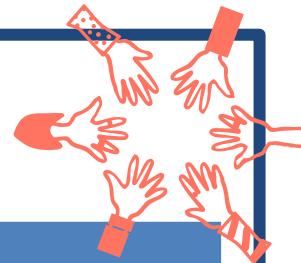
Assignment & Activities

- Assign a book.
- Exchange and discuss useful articles.
- Research learning opportunities.
- Review and discuss a letter or proposal written by the mentee.
- Attend a presentation of a mentee.





Feedback Tips



What to Do	How to Do It	Example
Align your feedback with the agenda	Provide real-time feedback. Make it usable and realistic. Offer concrete practical steps and options.	"I have a few ideas that might help..." "What works for me is..."
Provide feedback about behavior that the mentee can do something about	Stay with the mentee's behavior rather than succumb to the temptation to evaluate it.	"Tell me about the impact of the behavior..." "How might someone else see that behavior?"
When you talk from your perspective, remember that your reality is not the mentees reality.	When you talk about your own experience, set a context and be descriptive so that the mentee can see the parallels.	"In my experience, which was..., I found that...I know that is not your situation, but maybe there is something to learn here."
Check out your understanding of what is being said.	Take care not to undermine the mentee's self-esteem.	"I liked the way you..." "I am curious..." "I wonder..." "Have you ever considered...?"
Be aware of your communication style and how that works with that of your mentee	Share information about communication styles with your mentee, and discuss the implications for the feedback cycle.	"I find that I get defensive when..." "I react positively to..."
Avoid giving feedback when you lack adequate information.	Ask for time to get the information you need. Faking it doesn't work.	"To be honest with you, I need to think about that a little more."
Encourage the mentee to experience feedback as movement forward rather than interruption from the journey.	Continuously link progress and learning to the big picture and the journey.	"When we started out...And then...And now..."





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Guidance for Both Mentees & Mentors



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Ways to Build Trust



Active Listening

- Avoid Distractions
- Try not to interrupt
- Reflect & Validate – restate key points to show you are listening.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage deeper conversations.

Psychological Safety & Authenticity

- Share your own experiences – be open about challenges and lessons learned.
- Encourage honest dialogue – it's okay to share concerns or doubts.
- Make no assumptions.
- Be non-judgmental and respectful.
- Be aware of cross-cultural difference and explore how culture can influence different perspectives.
- Respect Confidentiality

Body Language/Eye Contact

- Create an environment open to conversation.
- Be aware of your body language.
- Try to maintain eye contact.
- Be mindful of tone and facial expressions – ensure your tone and expressions match your intent.
- Engage with non-verbal cues such as nods and gestures that suggest understanding.

Summarize Conversation

- Recall details from previous meetings.
- Clarify Next Steps - confirm action items at the end of meetings.
- Follow Up – Check in on previous topics to demonstrate commitment.

Advice:

Try to think about what works for you when building trust and use these techniques.

Share Predictive Index profiles and go over together (reach out for more details).



How to Use the Mentoring Agreement



Mentoring Agreement: Your Roadmap to Success

Think of a **mentoring agreement** as your roadmap for the journey ahead! It helps ensure that you and your mentor/mentee are on the same page when it comes to **goals, expectations, and how you'll work together**.

At your first meeting, take some time to create this agreement—it's a great way to talk about what you both hope to gain, how often you'll connect, and any key expectations. **Every mentoring relationship is unique**, so this agreement helps tailor the experience to fit what works best for both of you.

Typically, the mentee takes the lead in preparing and updating the agreement, but it's a shared effort to keep it useful and relevant.

Getting started is easy! Just swap out the dark gray text in this template with details that fit your mentoring partnership.

Need a little inspiration? Check out the **example** on the next page or the link below!

Link to download an example of the Mentorship Agreement:

[Mentor Agreement Template](#)



Mentorship Agreement

Instructions

We recommend that both the Mentor and Mentee review this agreement to set clear expectations and build a strong foundation for the mentoring relationship. By reviewing this together, the Mentor recognizes their role as a professional role model, sharing advice, experience, and guidance in a business setting. The Mentee gains valuable insights and professional development support while taking ownership of their own career growth. To get the most out of this partnership, take time to discuss each question thoughtfully and record your responses in the space provided.

Mentoring Logistics

Day	Time	Frequency	Location
Wednesdays	4:00	Bi-weekly	Online meeting
Preferred Method(s) of Communication:			
Other ways we will communicate will be via teams and email outside of our virtual sessions.			
Who Will Initiate Meetings and Interactions?			
Mentee			
If Meetings Are Cancelled, What Will We Do?			
Skip the meeting and resume at the next scheduled meeting			

Mentoring Goals, Expectations, and Responsibilities

Mentorship Objectives/Goals: What does the Mentee want to accomplish or learn?

- To develop a leadership career pathway to prepare for future leadership positions.
- Learn the basics of group roles, dynamics, and decision making to function constructively in group settings.
- To learn how to communicate effectively in networking situations.
- To gain a better understanding of best-practice leadership experiences.
- To gain a better understanding about how to play an effective role in influencing decisions.
- To further develop decision-making skills.

How does the mentee prefer to receive feedback:

- Via email or verbally, depending on the situation.
- Some people prefer to receive feedback in the moment.
- Feedback will be objective, constructive, and timely.

Relationship Check-in:

At approximately six weeks, we will check in and talk about the progress of the mentorship, and discuss how the relationship could improve. ...



Mentoring Boundaries & Confidentiality

What's out of the scope of mentorship?

- The Mentor will not be directly involved in resolving workplace disputes.
- The Mentor will not act as an advocate for the Mentee's promotions or career advancement.

What stays between us?

- Our conversations are confidential. We respect each other's trust and will not share details of our discussions without mutual agreement.

Mentoring Problem Resolution

If we have conflicts, issues, or obstacles, how will we resolve or deal with them?

- Handling conflicts early will help keep your mentoring relationship on track.
- Open and honest conversations are the best way to work through challenges.
- For example, if your mentee is relying on you too much, have a direct but supportive conversation to set clear expectations. You can also refer back to the mentorship guide for guidance on roles and responsibilities.

Relationship Length

When should the relationship end?

- We recommend a three-month mentorship, with the option to continue if both mentor and mentee agree.

Acknowledgements

- Both the Mentor and Mentee recognize this relationship as a meaningful opportunity for growth and learning. They commit to respecting each other's boundaries and maintaining confidentiality throughout their time together.
- This mentorship is entirely voluntary, and either person may choose to step away at any time with a simple notice to the other party and the program team.
- The Mentee acknowledges that they will take responsibility for scheduling the meetings and creating the agenda, and following up on action items discussed.
- The mentee understands that all decisions and actions are their own responsibility, regardless of any advice or guidance from the Mentor. The Mentor serves as a guide and support but is not responsible for the Mentee's choices or outcomes.



Preparing for a Mentorship Check-in



After a few months of mentoring, we recommend having a conversation about how things are going. Checking in is a great way to **reflect, celebrate wins**, and make **small tweaks** to keep things on track. Use these questions to guide your conversation or feel free to add your own questions:

- Are we making progress toward the goals we set?
- How do we feel about our mentoring partnership so far?
- What is working well for us, and why?
- Is there anything that could be working better?
- What small changes could help us get even more out of this experience?
- Are we using our time wisely during our meetings?
- How's our communication? Any ways we can improve?
- What adjustments can we make to better support each other?





Obstacles & Tips



Every mentoring relationship comes with its own set of challenges—this is completely normal! Getting to know, trust, and work with someone for your professional growth takes time, and obstacles should be expected along the way. The key is to approach these challenges with patience, openness, and a willingness to adapt.

Common Challenges

- **Time:** Finding the right balance—mentees may want more time than mentors can give.
- **Distance:** Remote relationships can be tough if not nurtured intentionally.
- **Different Styles:** Personalities or mentoring approaches may not align at first.
- **Too Much Reliance:** Mentees may lean too heavily on their mentors.
- **Receiving Feedback:** Mentees may struggle with constructive feedback.
- **Personal vs. Professional Needs:** The focus should stay on career growth, not personal matters.
- **Skill Gaps:** Mentees may need additional support in technical or interpersonal skills.
- **Lack of Engagement:** A mentee may not be fully open to learning.
- **Unexpected Changes:** Life happens—sometimes

Tips for Overcoming

- **Expect** some bumps in the road—mentoring is a journey, not a straight path.
- **Address** concerns openly and with respect. Honest conversations can strengthen your partnership.
- **If you're** feeling frustrated, check in with each other and **realign expectations**.
- **Work together** to find solutions rather than assuming the partnership isn't a good fit.

If you've tried to overcome the challenges, but the mentorship still isn't working, have a candid conversation with your mentor/mentee and then reach out to the Mentor Team for next steps.



Resource Links:



- [The Best Mentorships Help Both People Grow](#)
- [Coaching Real Leaders \(podcast\)](#)
- [10 different coaching models](#)
- [GROW Model Coaching demonstrations \(7 videos\)](#)
- The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business <https://a.co/d/ddUP5e7>

