



# The ACS Mentee Playbook

Build a sustainable relationship  
with your mentor to enhance  
your professional growth





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This playbook provides the tools for Society members in a mentee role - whether formal or informal - to successfully develop their mentee-mentor relationship. Mentees may be in different stages of their careers:

- New to their employment level,
- New to a group or organization, or
- Experienced leaders with a desire to develop new skills or perspectives.

Whatever stage you're in, the ideal mentee-mentor relationship is driven by both sides of the relationship. As a mentee, you have a crucial role to play in the success of your relationship with your mentor.

Note: Every mentee will serve as a mentor at some point. Understanding both roles helps with serving in both capacities. This playbook focuses on the mentee's role and also helps to illustrate the attributes of a good mentor.



# What to look for in a mentor

## Mentors are typically experienced and active in their professions. Your mentor should have:

- Extensive professional connections and a vibrant network
- Experience in your gap areas (to help bridge and fill them in)
- Capacity and eagerness to provide mentorship
- Capability for providing honest feedback and tips
- Professional reputation (Ask yourself: “Who do I want to model myself after?”)

## Role and responsibilities of a mentor

In their interactions with you, your mentor should:

<b>Demonstrate care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show curiosity.</li> <li>• Listen deeply.</li> <li>• Follow through on commitments.</li> <li>• Maintain confidentiality.</li> <li>• Assist mentee with networking and connections.</li> </ul>
<b>Expand your awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask open-ended questions.</li> <li>• Explore the mentee’s strengths and values.</li> <li>• Explore the mentee’s obstacles.</li> <li>• Reframe difficult situations.</li> <li>• Provide useful information and feedback.</li> <li>• Help the mentee develop a personal vision for growth or change.</li> </ul>
<b>Inspire you to take action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage clear and compelling goals.</li> <li>• Encourage focused action toward those goals.</li> <li>• Ask for a commitment to action.</li> </ul>

# How your mentor will support you

**A mentor's motivation to serve in their role typically comes from a desire to share the benefit of their experience and to contribute to the success of current and future leaders. Accordingly, your mentor will support you with:**



## **Developing your Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

Mentors help you define a career map to attain goals and identify talents, values, and interests. They help their mentee identify and address knowledge gaps. ([Learn more about IDPs at ChemIDPTM.](#))

## **Expanding your knowledge base**

Mentors share knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

## **Finding contacts and networking**

Mentors provide valuable opportunities by facilitating career and personal contacts from their own networks.

## **Exploring new ideas**

Mentors stimulate curiosity and build confidence by presenting new ideas, opportunities, and challenges.

## **Support**

Mentors encourage growth and achievement by providing a safe, open, and supportive environment.

## **Navigating professional interactions**

Mentors assist with navigating crucial conversations or tricky political waters in a professional setting.

## Your mentor will use a variety of techniques to support your goals, such as:

- Asking questions about your goals and aspirations,
- Helping you develop your career map and a development plan,
- Providing guidance and feedback,
- Sharing their knowledge and experience, and
- Connecting you with other people or groups that may be helpful to you.

## What your mentor DOESN'T Do

Your mentor does not:

- Directly manage their mentee.
- Directly intervene in their mentee's workplace or performance issues.



# What are your responsibilities as a mentee?

**Remember to always be respectful of your mentor's time. Mentoring is voluntary.**

A mentee typically comes to the mentorship relationship having identified one or more career-related goals, and they are seeking help or guidance from someone with more experience to achieve their vision. As a mentee, it is your responsibility to determine and vocalize the type of assistance you hope to receive from your mentor.

## **Role and responsibilities of a mentee**

Just as your mentor has responsibilities toward cultivating a healthy relationship with you, so do you. In your interactions with your mentor, you should:

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### **Demonstrate openness and willingness**

- Lower your guard and take risks.
- Listen and ask questions.
- Explore your own insights and views.
- Ask for help.
- Respect appropriate boundaries.

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### **Take action**

- Establish desired outcomes and goals.
- Prepare and implement action plans.
- Reflect on progress and results.

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### **Take responsibility for the experience**

- Determine specific needs.
  - Drive the relationship.
  - Come prepared.
  - Participate actively and fully.
  - Determine the focus and agenda for meetings.
  - Initiate the conversations.
  - Follow through on commitments.
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## Tips to become a “rockstar” mentee

Communication between both parties is essential for successful mentorship outcomes.

Following are tips for knocking your side of the relationship out of the park:

- Take the initiative in the relationship. Drive, but actively listen.
- Know what you are looking for in the mentorship relationship.
- Articulate your short- and long-term goals. Identify any known gaps.
- Be fully present and engaged. Do your best not to take your phone out or open your laptop.
- ALWAYS say thank you at the end of each session.
- Demonstrate gratitude by other, more personal methods: Send a handwritten thank you; state personally what you are gaining from the relationship.
- Ask candidly, “Am I meeting your expectations of me as a mentee?”
- Track your own progress. List accomplished goals and where you are with goals in progress.

## A note about confidentiality

All discussions within the mentorship should be considered confidential, unless both parties agree that a discussion will be taken outside the relationship. Confidentiality should be discussed up front. Mentor–mentee relationships can act as a safe space to discuss work issues, while at the same time they can drive visibility resulting from networking connections.



# Kick off your mentorship relationship

Once matched with a mentor, you should take the initiative to make the initial contact with your mentor. For your first meeting, you should have your resume, Individual Development Plan (IDP), career map, and business card on hand, if possible.

## Suggested discussion items for the first meeting

- Agree on the frequency (i.e., monthly, bimonthly) and format (face-to-face, Zoom, etc.) for subsequent meetings.
- Share personal and professional backgrounds; look for similar experiences. (Use your elevator speech to start.)
- Compare and contrast what each of you hopes to get out of the mentor–mentee relationship.
- Explore what each of you can contribute to the relationship.
- Discuss short- and long-term goals.
- Determine the estimated duration of the relationship (i.e., six months, one year).

After the initial meeting, you, as the mentee, should continue to move the mentor–mentee relationship forward.

## Suggested discussion items for successive meetings

- Share your IDP with your mentor for feedback and suggestions. If a personal development plan is not in place, work with your mentor to create one.
- Discuss possible events, training, or experiences that will enhance your development.

- Consider a shadowing opportunity to follow the mentor or an appropriate colleague.
- Seek networking meetings where you can meet other leaders, technical advisers, managers, colleagues, or partners to widen professional contacts.
- Share projects or issues being experienced in your work to gain input or suggestions. If you and your mentor do not work within the same company, be mindful to not disclose confidential business.
- Go over your career map (desires for future position and progression toward it) and IDP, or develop these with the mentor.
- Discuss how to navigate specific politics in your groups or organization.
- Consider ways to gain influence with specific people.
- If you're considering a career transition, go over what the mentor sees as pros and cons.
- Ask your mentor, "What do you see as some of my blind spots?"
- See how your mentor recommends gaining visibility within your company.

## **Tips to ensure productive meetings**

- Take the initiative to ask whether you should set up recurring meetings, or whether the mentor wants to do it.
- Have examples of your work on hand to share in case the topic is brought up.
- Be prepared to take notes.
- Be punctual. Communicate if plan changes occur.
- Review notes from the previous meeting and discuss actions taken.
- Draft an agenda ahead of time. Consider what is needed in this meeting.
- Be specific rather than general.
- Speak clearly and concisely. Limit digressions and "rabbit holes."
- Be prompt. Show up on time and perform action items on time. Limit excuses.

## How to deal with a mentee–mentor mismatch

Sometimes, the mentoring relationship does not work out. This can result from a bad fit, communication issues, a mentor or mentee who does not actively participate in the relationship, or the mentee–mentor relationship having run its course.

In the event this happens, the first step is to address the issue directly with your mentor. Mentorships should not be forced. Thus, if you feel progress is not being made, remain professional. Express appreciation for your mentor's time, provide polite notification that you will be moving forth with your next steps, and ask to stay in your mentor's network.

# Additional information, resources, and articles

### ACS mentoring postcard

<https://www.acs.org/content/dam/acsorg/education/students/graduate/mentoring-success-postcard.pdf>

### Find an internal sponsor to increase your visibility, and unlock opportunities

<https://www.acs.org/content/dam/acsorg/education/students/graduate/mentoring-success-postcard.pdf>

### The science of effective mentorship in STEMM

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/resource/25568/interactive/>

### Identify a role model – and a mentor

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/resource/25568/interactive/>

### ACS ChemIDPTM

<https://chemidp.acs.org/>

### Finding a mentor (C&EN)

[https://cen.acs.org/careers/career-tips/Finding-mentor/96/i14?ref=search\\_results](https://cen.acs.org/careers/career-tips/Finding-mentor/96/i14?ref=search_results)

### How an Individual Development Plan can help you advance your career goals

<https://inchemistry.acs.org/careers/individual-development-plan.html>

### What I wish I knew then: Advice from chemical industry executives

<https://inchemistry.acs.org/careers/individual-development-plan.html>

### Personal Career Consulting

<https://www.acs.org/careers/personal-career-consulting.html>



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