

How to Approach a Mentor

Identify a good mentor for you – When considering a mentor, try to find someone from whom you can learn and who gets satisfaction from helping others in their personal growth. Also, find someone who has found success or is uniquely brilliant in a certain area. Throughout the process, keep in mind that you are not limited to one mentor; you can have a mentor for every aspect of your career that you want to advance or develop.

Approach a mentor – The most natural way to begin a mentoring relationship is if the mentor you've identified is someone you know personally. Ask this person for a meeting or to grab coffee to talk about a particular issue. Most people will be willing to spend a few minutes with you if you ask politely and have a specific topic to address. Try to make a great impression and build rapport. Asking the question "Will you be my mentor?" is not necessary.

It's more difficult if you do not already know the potential mentor personally. In cases like this, ask a mutual acquaintance to introduce you. A great way to find this out is through LinkedIn, which lists any mutual connections you have with others. If you don't have any connections in common, a bold approach would be to attempt to contact the person directly, describing how you look up to that person, mentioning your desire to learn from them and asking if you could schedule a time to meet. After initial contact, you can move on to the coffee/brief meeting approach.

Get the most out of your mentorship – Keep in mind that your mentor's time is valuable, so make every minute count. Before meetings with your mentor, plan out goals for the conversation, prepare questions you want to ask, and keep them updated with your progress. It's fine to get off topic, but be sure you accomplish what you set out in each conversation.

Show your appreciation – Because your mentor is taking time out of his or her schedule and offering you the wisdom they've acquired through years of experience, show how much you appreciate it. Thank them (a lot!) and update them on your accomplishments or obstacles you've overcome that they've helped you with, so that they can hear how you've taken their advice and succeeded. In addition, try to be a resource for your mentor as well, whether you can be someone for them to bounce ideas off, reviewing something they wrote, or just singing their praises to everyone you meet.

Finding a mentor can be a very beneficial step in developing your career. They can guide you in the direction you want to go, teach you lessons they've learned—sometimes the hard way—from their experience, or introduce you to others that can help you move forward.

Source: Simply Hired