

## How to make the most of your mentor

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A mentor can give you knowledge and wisdom you cannot learn from a book or a course. Learn how to make the most of your mentorship sessions

A mentor can help you fast-track your success and avoid some common entrepreneurship pitfalls. Executive coach Penny Holburn says it's important to choose a mentor who has already done what you are aspiring to do.

"A mentor is there to share knowledge and skills for you to accelerate your growth. A good mentor will impart their wisdom and expertise and help you to tap into your own wisdom and understanding to find your own solutions. They can also be a great sounding board, a source of support, introduce you to their networks, and provide motivation when you need it," she says.

**Holburn suggests implementing the following strategies for making the most of your mentor:**

1. **Pick the right mentor.** This person needs to be someone who is successful in what you want to be successful in. You need to trust them and feel comfortable talking to them about almost anything. Your mentor needs to be someone who is emotionally mature with a genuine interest in helping you be the best you can be. Pick a mentor who will challenge you to think for yourself and utilise your own resources, not just supply answers.
2. **Take responsibility.** You need to work on making the relationship thrive. Don't leave it to your mentor to organise your meetings. Have a list of topics you would like to discuss. Follow up, pitch up and do the work.
3. **Be willing to listen.** If you don't listen and follow advice then why do you want someone's help? Swallow your ego. You are not there to be right, but to learn. Be open to new approaches and suggestions even if you don't initially like them. Don't do what you feel is wrong, but be open-minded to ideas and different ways of doing things.
4. **Respect your mentor.** Most mentors work for free. Respect their time. Arrive prepared and don't waste time. Ensure that you thank them for their contribution.
5. **Take an interest in your mentor.** By taking the time to get to know your mentor as a human being you can learn more about their experiences, achievements and failures, which will arm you with the information you need to succeed. Taking an interest also helps to build a more solid relationship and trust.
6. **Set goals.** Identify and agree on the goals you want to achieve with mentoring. Don't be too vague about what you want from the role. The more specific the objectives, the more likely they are to be met.
7. **Track your progress.** Agree on a time frame for mentoring and the frequency of meetings. Start with once a month and increase or decrease it, as you both see fit. Every six months or so evaluate how the relationship is progressing and whether you are achieving your goals.