How to Be a Good Mentee:
7 General Guidelines

Understand What You're Looking For: Before you approach a prospective mentor, be prepared to answer why you're interested in learning from this particular person. What type of guidance are you hoping to receive? Make sure your expectations are reasonable, as many would-be mentors will be scared off if they think they'll have to meet you every week for a year or act as a referee between you and your boss.

Lay Out a Vision for the Relationship: Once your mentor agrees to engage, open your first meeting with a tentative schedule for when and where you're going to get together, and what you're going to discuss. Read the person's reaction. Hopefully, they will be enthusiastic and you can finalize a plan. But if they aren't, now is the time to find out. You don't want a mentor who is meeting you out of obligation.

Respect Your Mentor's Time: Your mentor likely has a busy life outside of her relationship with you, so don't make time-consuming requests or call them at all hours for advice. Stick to the designated meeting schedule and do everything in your power to ensure that get-togethers start and end on time.

Prepare Questions in Advance – and Listen to the Answers: Before each meeting, put some thought into what you'd like to learn from your mentor. Brainstorm at least 5 questions, and while asking them, show that you're listening by nodding, ignoring interruptions like your beeping phone, jotting down notes, and asking relevant follow-ups.

Tell the Truth: It may take a few conversations to trust your mentor, but once you do, don't hold back important pieces of information. If your mentor doesn't have the full story, their advice won't be as helpful. Also, don't be afraid to admit mistakes and failures. Your mentor is there to guide you through them.

Be Open to Change: Many people don't like receiving criticism in any form, but recognize that your mentor just wants to help you improve. When you receive feedback, don't get immediately defensive. Instead, ask yourself honestly if your mentor has a valid point. If they do, solicit their input on making a course-correction.

Look for Ways to Help in Return: Show your mentor the appreciation they deserve for giving you the benefit of their experience. Follow up on your commitments to them, and consider what you can do to make their life easier. Perhaps, for example, you can assist with some research for an upcoming presentation, or you can make a networking introduction.

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